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# INDYLLS OF GREECE

HOWARD V. SUTHERLAND



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# IDYLLS OF GREECE



# IDYLLS OF GREECE

(Third Series)

BY  
HOWARD V. SUTHERLAND

The stars have been my loves; and I have lain  
With sighing winds and won their confidence.



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To  
GILES B. BOSWORTH



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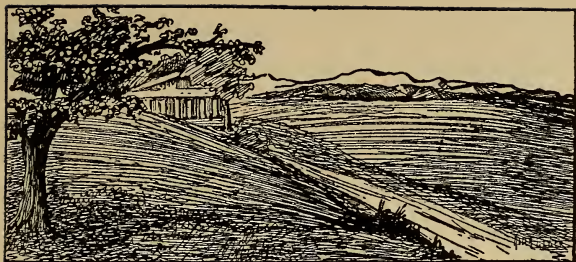
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## IDAS AND MARPESSA





## IDAS AND MARPESSA

**N**OW, once again, with lute of ivory  
And lower'd eyes, I sing the olden tales  
Of olden loves, of lovers who were lured

In other days more beautiful than these  
By chilly Death from earth's bright winsome-  
ness ;

Who whisper now in his grey underworld  
Of unforgotten kisses and vain sighs,  
Of trembling hands that touch'd so tenderly  
The dear, warm body in the Long Ago.  
A little while and each of us must pass  
Where these are waiting ; where no hornèd  
moon,

Star-follow'd and benignant, pours o'er men  
Her constant pity ; where no sun looks down  
And mocks endeavor. In eternal hush  
There meet the old-time lovers, and the air

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Is fragrant with their whisper'd memories,  
With tales of Youth's pure passion and its  
dreams.

And though men face with set and steely eyes  
To-day's sheer glitter and inconsequence,  
Or laugh despite its thunder, ye that knew  
A dear one's presence, and have bent at dusk  
Above her spirit's beauty, know full well  
What lingers like the echoes of hush'd harps  
As Age's shadow nears us. Iron men,  
And they that weaken in adversity,  
Are loved alike; though Death be pitiless,  
Love eyes us with compassion. Therefore he—  
Blind to our faults but never to our charms—  
Remember'd is as each of us goes down  
Whence naught arises; therefore, from the din  
Of constant battle turning, here and there  
A few there are who deem a holy thing  
The laurell'd Past; who fain would dream again  
As others dream'd. The sickle laid aside,  
I bind for them this sheaf of faint-heard song,  
And leave it standing in the fields of Time  
Till song and singer be alike forgot.

**A** GOLDEN thing is friendship; holy is  
That love whose other name is constancy.  
Idas, the friend of Jason, found at last  
In fair Marpessa peace, as most men find,

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Or soon or late, serene companionship  
In one whose lips hint more than may be told.  
For woman's love, since erst the world began,  
Is oft unutter'd; but like yonder blue  
That swathes the rugged tops of solemn hills,  
Proclaims itself by silence, by a glance  
That lies like benediction on the soul.  
The melody unheard, the airy song  
Suggested by the silence, and the peace  
Behind the moveless azure—these suggest  
The love that bides behind a woman's lips.  
For even when those lips proclaim their love,  
And when her eyes shine promise, of her soul  
Her love is silent fragrance, as its scent  
The soul is of the love-desiring rose.  
In olden days the tellers of these tales,  
Who wove their fancies from the glinting webs  
The gods blew earthward, or of memories  
Robb'd the hush'd Past, have told how Idas won  
The daughter of Evènus, racing him  
With hot-soled feet; and how he conquer'd him;  
And how the hoary runner plunged to death  
Within the waters that assumed his name  
And hid his body. But the victor claim'd  
Her hand as prize and led her, happy-eyed,  
From harsh Ætolia, where her grace was lost,  
To his bright valleys in Messenia.  
And she, Marpessa, in her husband found

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Her girlhood's dream, and was most satisfied  
To worship and be worship'd. In the dawn  
She rose betimes to see him seek the woods  
Before the deer were stirring; long ere noon,  
Her household duties over, for her lord  
She watch'd without the bronzen latticed gates  
To lead him to their palace; and when came  
The softly-breathing Night with eyes of dream,  
She raised her lips to him so brave and clean,  
Who faced the stars as he had faced the sea.  
Now, thinking back, it seems that in their woods  
My lonely spirit saw them; hand in hand,  
Serene in silence, or with burning lips  
Vowing their heart's indifference to time,  
Their love and their eternal constancy.  
Youth's roses had departed from her cheeks;  
His locks were not so brown as when the waves  
Flung their pure mist upon them; yet the gods  
Still number'd them with lovely things, with all  
That laugh'd and look'd not backward, nor  
surmised

The night behind the promise of the day.  
And deeming each the other beautiful  
They both were young; for Age no finger lays  
On her who's loved; and he whose lips receive  
A heart's impassion'd murmurs, fears no more  
The whisper'd warning from the lips of Death.  
And even now she bade him weave for her

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

In such embroidery as color'd words  
Can hang upon the silence, all the tale  
Of Jason and his heroes; how the sea  
Curl'd angrily around them, while the wind  
Shrill'd through its teeth its heritage of hate;  
He told her of the heroes; and at last  
Of dark Medea, who had charm'd his lord,  
Or so the heroes said, and married him.  
And then he told her how the land was full  
Of awful mutterings of unseen mouths  
That said her hands were bloody. Thus he told  
The day's new gossip much as we to-day  
May gossip in the twilight. Now, as then,  
The idlest tale, if one but whisper it,  
Finds ears to give it welcome; now, as then,  
The wind is bearer of the distant deed  
And Truth is ever that which is untold.

AND when she spoke it was of other things  
That dearer seem'd to him than tales of  
war.

For she a woman was, and dream'd again  
Of that first night when o'er her blessed hand  
He bent and said he loved and worship'd her.  
That eve they linger'd by a marble fane  
Whose stilly whiteness fill'd their hearts with  
peace,  
And watch'd the Dusk spread purple coverlets

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Upon the mountains' summits. On the woods  
Lay darker mantles, and the vales were black  
With sleep that woo'd the cattle and the flowers.  
They spoke no word, but watch'd with wonder-  
ment

The many changes, knowing they were one  
With stars and glory; one with loveliness,  
With hills and trees and all that graced the  
vales.

Then, in her father's garden, he and she  
That summer's night had wander'd. Far away  
The heavy hills now slumber'd; in the skies  
The stars were gather'd, moving solemnly  
Their order'd ways, expectant of the moon.  
And now was heard the twitter of a bird,  
And then a cricket's protest, else so still  
The air about them that he caught the wind's  
Soft whisper in her tresses; and the while  
She look'd away, his love o'erpower'd him  
And he had touch'd those tresses with his lips.  
But she was dreaming then of—Ah! who knows?  
Perhaps of him. Perhaps unknown to him  
She sensed his adoration, as the flower  
May sense at noon the pity of the dusk.  
Perhaps, although she never felt that kiss,  
Night's stilly voices whisper'd: "Thou art  
loved!";

Perhaps the stars proclaim'd it, or the wind,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

The hopeless wind, whose love is long lament.  
Perhaps she thought of whispers and of sighs,  
Of cool-cheek'd roses brought on golden morns  
With silv'ry words of greeting. Ah! who  
knows?

And wand'ring home beneath the risen moon  
She lean'd to him a little, and his arm  
Had almost dared to hold her prisoner.  
But when at last they reach'd the shadow'd  
porch,

By scented creepers shelter'd from the world,  
Again love master'd him and, ere she knew,  
His lips had seal'd his secret on her hands.  
And though his eyes were hidden now from  
her,

And though his voice was silent, she was 'ware  
That this no passion was, no youthful heat  
To pass ere morning with the icy moon  
And all her chaste attendants. This was love,  
That grows in silence, love that worship is;  
Whose constant flame burns constantly above  
Life's grey illusion, and essays to light  
The hopeless highways through the realms of  
Death.

And then with face uplifted, that his eyes  
Might seek her own eyes' solace, he had told  
His love for her, and how, as in a net  
The tangled bird may flutter, now his heart

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Was caught for ever by that guileless charm  
With which the gods had graced her. He was  
one

Who lived for action; and his speech was bare  
As winter's dreamless branches; but a sheen  
Encircled him that evening, and his words  
Seem'd golden like the heart-song of a bird  
That sings its joyous message in the sun.  
And he had won her, though the moon was gone  
Before, all lily-like, she droop'd to him  
And kiss'd his forehead, saying she was his;  
And kiss'd again, as if she knew that now  
The gods would eye them through unkindly  
lids

And wreck the flimsy fabric of their dream.  
For they that sit in judgment love us not  
Who dwell in Time, imprison'd, till we seek  
The silence and the shadow. From their seats  
They watch our vain endeavor, hear our sighs,  
And note the eager groping of our hands  
To hands that tremble uswards; through the  
dusk

Our whispers rise and vanish, and they hear,  
And hollow laughter thins the lips of them.  
For human loves are holy; our desire  
Outflames their awful splendor; and although  
They scorn us, who are hostages of Death,  
They envy us, and hate us for our dreams.

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

AND so the while they linger'd in the  
woods,

And Idas bade her whisper, to her love  
Marpessa told that story. And it seem'd  
Each time he heard it, it was ever new,  
Or, like a jewel held against the sun,  
Took unknown beauties to it. Through the  
trees

Serenity beheld them, marvelling,  
As Nature ever marvels at the fair,  
At so much happiness in two so fond,  
In two so pure and perfect. To the trees  
They seem'd akin, and to the wind-swept hills  
Array'd in joyous colors; to the birds,  
Singing from hearts so cramm'd with happiness  
They never can outpour it, they were things  
Half unsubstantial, with the tiny blooms  
That smiled their stilly message of delight.  
And when her voice was silent, and the tale  
Was ended, he would question: "Even now  
I know not how I won thee, I, whose arms  
Have fear'd to clasp thy beauty." And she  
smiled

And bade him wonder. "While I live," she  
said,

"My love must needs be silent. When I die  
I'll whisper thee its secret, and thy heart  
Shall strain against the barriers of death

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

To bring me solace." And he bent to her,  
And said: "I love thee, and would e'er abide  
Within the folded pinions of thy soul,  
At peace and happy. If thou ventur'est  
Where ghosts await us ere I go with thee,  
Thy love shall draw me thither; should I go,  
I'll wait thy boat's still beaching, and assuage  
Thy murmurs with the welcome of mine eyes."  
"My love thou art," she whisper'd. "I am  
thine.

Our day is at its morning; music fills  
Our happy hearts as now the air is fill'd  
With yon dear bird's impassion'd melody.  
The noon shall follow with its sense of peace,  
Then blessed evening with its memories  
And all the sweet companionship of stars.  
I gaze untroubled down the aisles of Time,  
Because thy love shall guard me." Then he  
kiss'd

The hand that touch'd all-tenderly his hair.  
"I only know I love thee," he replied.  
"Thy words are music; let my silence be  
The air that would contain them. Hark! the  
bird

Has pity on my dumbness, and to thee  
Would sing the benediction in my heart."  
And then they listen'd, and the woods became  
Their temple, and the bird its feather'd priest

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Whose wholesome adoration pleased the gods  
And made the solemn eyes of them grow kind.  
Then Idas press'd his dear one close to him.

"It loves," he said. "It loves, and therefore  
sings.

But though I love, my worship must be mute,  
My fond Marpessa, my beloved wife."

And then, perhaps, she raised to his her lips  
And saw, with closèd eyes, the olden dream  
In all its purity. Oh! never say

That love is aught but holy. From the dark  
We journey to the darkness; love, the while,  
Enswathes us in its utter spotlessness  
And makes of poor, imperfect instruments  
Things worth the What's-to-follow. Love is  
all.

**F**OR two swift years the gods look'd care-  
lessly


On Idas and Marpessa. There were wars  
'Twixt god and god, intrigues and jealousies  
To hold their bright attention; otherwheres  
Kings robed in purple, wearing crowns of gold,  
Look'd at the stars perhaps too haughtily,  
Or plann'd To-morrow's conquest; them the  
gods

Smote silently and swiftly, laughing long  
To see the pomp that follow'd them to death,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

As if they thought their banners or their plumes  
Might alter Death's enorme solemnity,  
Or hint: These once were kings. For two  
    swift years  
Those lovers, now long silent, dream'd their  
    dreams.  
They laugh'd together in the morning's cool  
And raised their babes. And then the gods  
    look'd down  
And saw their fondness, and an arch'd surprise  
Above their heavy eyes bode ill to them.

S when great birds, white-plumaged in  
    the foam  
Of untrack'd seas from drowsiness  
    awake,  
And make the bright air brighter with the flash  
Of light-tipp'd wings, so now the shining  
    heavens  
Wherein the gods gleam'd idly, seem'd awake  
As, one by splendid one, they roused themselves.  
Then moved among them a delightful boy,  
The star-eyed Ganymedes, loved of Zeus,  
Whose rounded limbs the winds kiss'd joyously  
The while he slumber'd; in his hand he bore  
A crystal goblet topp'd with fragrant foam,

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

And touch'd each snowy shoulder. And the  
    gods

Were glad to see his pretty artlessness  
So drank and laugh'd, and, laughing, drank  
    again.

And then on golden platters, finely wrought,  
Most rich in pictures of heroic deeds

And loves now sung by singers and the stars,

The curl-brow'd boy to each reclining god

Took honey-sweet ambrosia; and they ate,

And thus renew'd their youth. And being fill'd

They look'd again to where the fair earth  
    gleam'd

As gleams a crystal river when the sun

Pours its hot love upon it. Saying naught

They gazed thereon in rapture, much as we

May watch the thing from which still Beauty's  
    breath

Has blown the grossness, asking of themselves

Why Zeus had made a toy so beautiful

For Time's dull tooth to gnaw at, and despoil.

Swiftly they saw with their all-seeing eyes

The mountains' majesty, the charm of vales,

The drowsy forest's beauty; from the woods

Their gaze turned slowly to the silv'ry streams

That wound through gay and flower-enamell'd  
    meads

And laugh'd while Death allur'd them to the sea.



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

They saw the city with its hordes of men  
As blind and selfish as their sons to-day ;  
Amassing wealth beyond the needs of them,  
Disputing vainly in their ignorance  
Of things as far beyond them as the stars.  
They laugh'd to see the soldier's martial stride,  
The condescension of the sated lord,  
Who smiled on worth and frown'd on poverty  
While Death stood silently beside his seat  
And eyed him with grave patience. In their  
hearts

They mock'd man's pride, and wish'd him bitterness.

They saw the hardy peasant at his task  
Behind his straining oxen ; on the hills  
The piping boy with brown'd and sturdy  
limbs

Beside his sheep ; and where the rocking sea  
Responded to the wooing of the sun,  
And gleam'd its pleasure, bearded fishermen  
Whose eyes roved landward where their loved  
ones were.

They saw the priests perform the sacrifice  
On ancient altars hewn from gleaming stone,  
While white-robed vestals watch'd the sacred  
flames

And sang the solemn pæans ; in the fields  
They saw the women bent above the grapes.



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

The tranquil kine amused them, for they  
thought

Of restless Io's heavy punishment;

And when a deer would raise its antler'd head,

Or the meek rabbit signal its affright

With lifted ears alert to every sound,

Their bright eyes widen'd as they hoped to see

A shepherd's wooing of a willing nymph.

And loud they laugh'd to hear what vows he  
made

Of lasting faith, or swore to cherish her

Despite her fault; for well the wise gods knew

The bees are fond while flowers are yet to  
win,

But soon forget the flower that is despoil'd.

**A**PART from all the rest, Apollo sat,

But eyed the earth as idly. In his hair

Such glory linger'd that his face was bright

As is the sun itself, and yet his eyes

Were blacker than the gloom of wintry skies

Ere stars adventure from their hiding place.

One hand lay heavy on his marbled knee

As, forward bent, his gaze pierced fearlessly

The gulfs of blue; the other held the lyre

With which at times he charm'd his grave com-  
peers

By dream-evoking music, strains as sad

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

As Day's bright scorn or Night's sweet constancy.

But now, though Zeus oft eyed him lovingly  
As if in supplication, at his side  
The lyre was mute; for where the trees enclosed  
A moveless pool on that revolving sphere  
Where dreams are born that Fate may mock at  
them,

He saw—Marpessa. And the joy in him  
Became extinguish'd like a blown-out light  
Because, all-suddenly, he longed for her,  
Who seem'd a thing of whitest ivory  
Within an em'rald casket; like a flame  
His joy leap'd up and suddenly went out  
And left his huge heart empty, as to-day  
Our little joy as suddenly is gone  
As is the fragrance of the fated rose.  
But heedless of the ever-burning gaze  
That flamed above her movements, in the  
pool

Marpessa bathed, her black hair having bound  
About her brows all-tightly. By the reeds  
Her garments lay, and though they snowy were  
Yet she was whiter, for her purity  
Herself was, as its pallor is the moon,  
And though a wife yet was she innocent.  
The pretty deer, with large and lustrous eyes  
And hesitating hoofs, came from the trees

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

And nosed the glinting water, eyeing her  
As though she were a thing of woods and  
hills,

A thing that knew and loved them; and anon,  
When they had sensed the loveliness of her  
And sipp'd their fill, they turn'd their heads  
from her

And shyly sought the forest's shade again.  
The birds, attired in brilliant liveries,  
Consider'd her a sister, look'd at her,  
And sang while looking; then, with wetted  
wings,

Flew to their mates and woke the scented peace  
With twitter'd gossip, till these others sought  
The little pool that held the wonder-one.

Then, as he gazed, their swiftly-moving wings  
Seem'd brighter to Apollo than the skies  
When sunset tints them; and he envied them  
Their fondness for Marpessa. From his seat  
He tower'd as suddenly as does the flame  
The winds have tortured; and had sought her  
then,

While yet his heart's Titanic passion-throb  
Paled his bright face. But Zeus, the Father,  
call'd,

And set him to a task that hinder'd him.

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

AND once again, that same task being done,  
He peer'd from out the shelter of a cloud  
And saw Marpessa. It was Even now,  
And they that mock the destinies of men  
Sat solemnly together, knee by knee,  
Beneath grave Zeus and his all-jealous spouse.  
And while they whisper'd of the day to come,  
The sad-eyed Dusk, with dreams in either hand,  
Stepp'd from their midst and sought the weary  
earth.

Before the gentle sorrow of her face  
The light withdrew, to men whom Sleep still  
bless'd

Bearing the day's illusion, and the hope  
For that which, being granted, proves but vain.  
And while he gazed upon the half-hush'd woods,  
Where now the trees in blessèd stillness  
Exhaled their souls, all-grateful for the day,  
From out their gardens to the greater peace  
Marpessa came, and Idas. Lover-like,  
His arm was still about her; and again  
He charm'd her with the story of their love  
In days that now seem'd days of golden dream.  
And though so oft the story he had told,  
Yet seem'd it ever new. In wonderment  
She walk'd beside him, raising trustingly  
Her eyes to his when he a deed recall'd  
That brought the Past back, and its memories.

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Above their heads, where arch'd the heavy  
boughs,

The birds cheep'd faintly, knowing that the  
night

Was drawing nigh, and soon the hateful owl

Would hoot its feud against all feather'd things

And furry creatures, while the heartless moon

Cross'd regally the heavens. Amid the leaves

In blest security they hid their heads

Beneath their wings, and then the woods were  
still

As if with expectation. And the while

The darkness thicken'd, by a well-known path

The lovers sought a bower beloved of them,

And whisper'd there, as if the birds might hear,

About their love that still so wondrous seem'd.

Forgetting naught they lived their dream  
again—

Their first sweet stammer'd vows; her first shy  
kiss

When, so it seem'd, the gods had turn'd aside

In envy of a girl's pure tenderness;

The silence that was music; and the calm

That slowly flamed to passion—Ah! if thou

Whose lids now droop above this halting line

Hast loved as they loved, let thy mem'ry paint

That perfect picture for thee. Having loved

Thou knowest all things perfect; one thou art

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

With Idas or Marpessa. Kingdoms change,  
Stars wane and mountains vanish; love alone  
Remains To-day what Yesterday it was,  
And makes us kin to all that's turn'd to dust.

AND while the Night enswathed the sleep-  
ing earth,  
Asserting its dominion over men  
Whose hearts were joyous, men whose hearts  
were sad,  
Where dream'd the gods, the ever-deathless  
ones,  
It darken'd too. Each splendid star now faced  
Its sister orb in silv'ry sympathy  
And left the high air widow'd; but there glow'd  
Where sat the gods, a steely after-light  
In luminous suggestion, such as woos  
The crystal fringes of the rolling sphere  
Where white-furr'd bear tread heavily the snow.  
The winds stroked rhymeless music from their  
harps,  
Intoning solemnly their airy chant  
In praise of Zeus. "Supremest! Thunderer!  
Whose glance is as the lightning; thou whose  
breath  
Titanic cedars bends submissively,  
Heaps sea on sea, extinguishes the stars!  
Gather'd from far we kneel and worship thee

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

In wild, unfetter'd music. We have seen  
Man's pitiful endeavors, deeds and dreams  
Beneath thy notice. Death makes mock of  
them,

Whose little life is spent ere thou and thine  
Are conscious of their being. Thee we praise,  
Who art alone enduring; by whose will  
We wake from nothing, by whose will we die."  
But Zeus, with sad, impenetrable eyes,  
Gazed into space, well-knowing that at last  
Creator and created are as one—

Are doom'd as is the sunset's holy glow,  
Are vain as are the hopes of yesterday.  
And then the gods that sat at Zeus's feet  
With half-hush'd voices answer'd: "Thou art  
he

Whose eyes have dream'd all things of consequence.

Before it came, thou knewest of To-day  
And Destiny's decrees. We bend to thee  
Who art the Father." And again the winds  
Intoned their praise: "Thou only canst out-  
stare

The eyes of Time. Death lays no hands on  
thee;

But crams his grey and echoless abode  
With all that thou createst. Thou art he  
To whom they wildly clamor ere they tread



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

The way that leads to silence and despair.”  
Then once again the gods’ deep murmurs voiced  
Their answ’ring adoration; but the eyes  
Of Zeus were fix’d and moody. So the rock,  
Unmindful of the passion of the sea,  
Awaits its end; it scorns the sun’s caress,  
The wind’s advances and the lightning’s hate.

AND now the heights were silent. Cloud on  
cloud,  
With fleecy shoulders leaning each to each,  
Took for the night their stations, while the  
winds  
Remain’d without and roam’d, disconsolate,  
The starry highways. One by splendid one  
The gods lay down to wait Aurora’s call  
To see the dawnburst, note with ecstasy  
The modest flower’s unfolding, and delight  
In that first note with which the happy bird  
Heralds the day and all its promises.  
Austerely silent, at the feet of Zeus  
They fell asleep, or gazed through half-closed  
eyes  
Upon the face that brooded over them.  
And once again, like huge and moveless birds,  
The watchers of the tragedies of men  
Lay couch’d amid the cloud-mass stillily;  
Prepared to dream of flights against the sun,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Enormous circlings to the pleasant earth  
Or swift descents through endless gulfs of  
space.

But one was wakeful, one who lay apart  
And strove to pierce with melancholy gaze  
The heedless clouds—Apollo. At his side  
His lyre still idle lay. No breathless tones  
Lured fancies to the eyes of them that slept,  
Or woke the others' musings. By himself  
He lay and suffer'd, anxious for the dawn  
That he might see Marpessa, and, ere night,  
Win her from Idas and the things she loved.



HE morning dawn'd, a morn of joyous-  
ness,

Of blue, bright skies; a morn of wonder-  
ment

So breathless that the ever-trilling lark  
Outsung itself while mounting, flight by flight,  
To where all space seem'd thirsty for its  
song.

A first, faint breeze, fore-runner of the winds  
That soon would follow, from the Caves of Pearl  
Where homed the plaintive echoes of the deep  
Came slowly forth, and fill'd the airy aisles  
With sea-sweet fragrance. As the trees awoke

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

They trembled slightly, and the whisp'ring  
leaves

Greeted each other in the speech that is  
More delicate than music. Moveless then,  
Like virgins at the hour of sacrifice,  
They stood and waited till with ruder hands  
The winds should touch them, sway them to and  
fro

In wildest dance, and leave them suddenly  
To mourn their stripp'd and tatter'd dra-  
peries.

And while a silence still possess'd the air  
Save for the dwindling cadence of the lark,  
To where the steps led downward Idas came  
From out the palace with his shaggy hounds.  
Marpessa follow'd with his trusted spear  
And bow and arrows; but her dragging feet  
And smileless lips betoken'd she was sad  
This golden morning; and had kept him there  
To hear the first sweet prattle of their babes  
Had he not seem'd so eager for the chase.  
But when she laid his weapons at his feet,  
And raised to his the question of her eyes,  
He placed his arm about her, and his touch  
Made her forget, who was so solely his.

"Nay, fear not, wife," he said. "Ere noon is  
come

The hounds shall bay before the welcome gates,

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

And call thee forth to greet me. Thou shalt  
see

My shoulders hid beneath the hugest skin  
That made a bear seem fearful; but thy feet  
This very night, when o'er thy heavy lids  
Sleep draws the velvet solace of his plumes,  
Shall tread it as thou goest to thy couch  
To dream of him who loves thee." "Ah," said  
she,

"Who goes away is ever free of care;  
Who stays is heavy-hearted. Thou and I  
Are one, my husband; when thou leavest me,  
Though the blest sunshine trembles in my hair,  
My heart becomes the darksome lair of fear.  
I love thee, Idas." "And I love thee, too,"  
Her husband answer'd. "I have thought of  
thee

When, call'd in Greece's service, I have dared  
The swift, unerring dart of bitter Death.  
Thy love has kept me scathless, and thy voice  
Has whisper'd me in hours of loneliness  
Such words as gave me courage. I have lived  
Since first I loved thee; and I love thee still,  
And fain would live to win for thee and mine  
Fresh honor and more glory. When I go  
To fight for Greece, thou sayest not a word;  
Yet now I go to bring thee——" Then he  
laugh'd

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And stroked the worry from her low, cool brow;  
Then bade her note how eager were the hounds  
To prove their mettle. And she clung to him  
And look'd at him in silence. Ah! who knows  
The thoughts behind a woman's trustful eyes,  
Or senses all she suffers? Through the years  
We take without a question all she gives,  
But never know her. Infancy and age  
Alike depend upon her; in his prime  
Man strides alone to learn his destiny;  
He crowns himself whenever he succeeds,  
But turns to her for comfort when he fails.  
So Idas laugh'd and kiss'd her. "Smile on  
me,"

He said at last, his weapons in his hand;  
"That when I venture where the woods are  
dark

Thine eyes shall light me, and the memory  
Of thy sweet face may hearten me against  
What odds may wait me in the monster's cave."  
And while the eager dogs leap'd noisily,  
Or whined with noses pointed to the woods,  
She kiss'd his forehead; and he strode away,  
The dogs beside him watchful of his eye  
And silent now as he was. And while yet  
Marpessa's hands were clasp'd against her  
heart,

He pass'd within the menace of the woods.

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

AND while her darlings slept, two pretty  
babes,

All pink and white and smiles and innocence,  
To that same pool beyond the garden's walls  
Marpessa went, unfearing. Now the woods  
Were bright with promise, for the tallest trees  
Beheld the first swift lances of the sun  
Glint in the east, and drive in front of them  
The last doom'd line of hesitating grey.  
But still the grass, from which her sandals  
brush'd

Uncounted dewdrops mirroring the world,  
Was cool in shadow, and the leaves were wet  
As if the fleeing Night had wept o'er them.  
And while she sped beneath the whisp'ring trees,  
From glade to glade where now the startled  
hare

Look'd hurriedly upon her, and was gone,  
She thought of Idas. Was it years ago  
He woo'd and won her? Or but yester-morn  
She said she loved him? For it seem'd her love  
Was like the light, the golden light of day,  
That grew each moment stronger; scarce she  
knew

How much she loved him. Ah! the gentle trees  
That bent above the soil in sympathy  
Would know her grief; and so she raised to  
them

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Her pleading hands; and though they silent  
were,

She sensed their pity and was comforted.

But ere she came to where the shaded pool

Invited with its stillness, in her path

Stood one so splendid that the sun itself

Could make his face no brighter. Curling  
locks,

That gleam'd above a forehead marble-pale,

Caught the descending glory, but his eyes

Were dark with mystery, black yet terrible

As passion is, that hungers for the thing

Beyond the fever'd reaching of its hand.

But though his face was flame, the form of him

So perfect was, so chastely wonderful,

That, awed to silence and astonishment,

Marpessa eyed him as a moment's dream,

Half-fearing he might vanish. Then a smile

Caress'd his lips, a smile so luminous

That glory seem'd to have its home in him,

And he was light itself—light radiant

In, of all forms, the form most beautiful.

Now, seeing he had charm'd her, as the flame

Ensnares the soft-wing'd priestess of the dark,

He spoke. "Marpessa!" Just the name of  
her.

But, oh! his voice was as the voice of one

Who deems his love for evermore removed

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Beyond the bridgeless gulfs of hopeless death,  
Beyond all winning. As the echoes died  
The silence seem'd suggestive of a woe,  
So heavily it lay upon the soul  
Of her that listen'd. And the hand of her,  
While still she faced him with untroubled eyes,  
Was slowly lifted to her drooping lips  
As if in question. But, before she spoke,  
Again Apollo cried that airy name,  
Again it echo'd till the glade was fill'd.  
"Marpessa!" Oh! the tenderness of it.

And then he held his hand outstretch'd to her  
And look'd his longing; but as yet she thought  
She dream'd by daylight, and the thing would  
pass

As all dreams pass, however beautiful.  
And still his beauty charm'd her, and, anon,  
The air contain'd her hesitating hand  
And heard her whisper: "Art thou Love itself,  
Or Beauty's spirit? Or art thou a man,  
And made of that same perishable stuff  
That waits for death to ease it of its pain?  
Or do I dream and think thou gleamest there,  
While naught's around me save the list'ning  
trees

And shifting sunlight? If a man thou art,  
Whence comest thou? What hero-bearing land  
May claim thy service, and what mother's eyes



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Have joy'd above thy beauty? " Then in tones  
That thrill'd at times the purest silences  
Of highest heaven, Apollo answer'd her:  
" Man am I not, nor subject unto death;  
But number'd am with those whose gaze serene  
Watches the world from heights of amethyst  
Where sits my father. I am he that hymns  
The song of morning, and, when even's torch  
Reddens the west, I sing the requiem  
That mourns the sun's down-going. I am he  
To whom the Muses listen, and the stars  
Echo the songs that tremble from my lips.  
My mother was Latona." While he spoke,  
A startled cry escaped Marpessa's lips  
As, fearing now his presence, she essay'd  
To ease her eyes in darkness with her hand.  
And still was silent. " Now thou knowest me,"  
The god continued, and his voice was soft  
As that of waves on sands of drowsy isles.  
" On sapphire morns of golden joyousness  
Thy lips have sung my praises; thou hast seen  
The curling incense widen in its rise  
To circle me with fragrance. Drop thy hands  
That I may see the beauty of thine eyes,  
O fair Marpessa!" Then she look'd at him,  
Unconscious of his purpose. " Brightest  
god,"  
She whisper'd faintly as she lean'd to him;



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

"Thou callest me Marpessa. What am I  
That thou, in accents sweeter than the wind  
On eves of pearl, shouldst call me by my name?  
I am but mortal, and no more to thee  
Than the doom'd flower that perishes with day."  
And then he open'd wide his gleaming arms  
And look'd at her, as he had often look'd  
On other beauties willing to be won;  
And once again the forest heard him sigh:  
"Marpessa! fair Marpessa!" Then at last  
She sensed his love, and straightway shrank  
from him

As from a thing unclean and dangerous.  
But he continued with a swifter speech  
To tell his passion. "Ah! thou knowest now  
Why thus I cry 'Marpessa'! As I gazed  
From heaven's bright heights and saw thee, in  
my heart

Love's sudden torch was lighted. Thee I love.  
Unearthly splendors woo me when I pass  
Those ways serene; the nymphs' white loveliness  
Awaits me where the fern nods dreamily  
Its acquiescence to the wooing wind.  
But thou art fairer than the whitest nymph  
That trembles in the moonlight. I have seen  
Thy fated beauty, and I yearn for thee  
As one in hell may hunger for the light."  
But closer now she drew her purple robe

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Across her breast. "Thou lovest hopelessly,  
O flame-bright god," she said. "My love is his  
Who won me from my father, who has spun  
His golden dreams about me till to him  
I seem as lovely as the brightest star.  
Two babes remind us of our mating time,  
Of days when yet we whisper'd each to each  
The pretty nothings that to lovers are  
More dear than all the wisdom of the years.  
And now that we are cooler, side by side  
We go our way, believing in the gods  
And one another, fearless of the end."  
But now Apollo near'd her. "Thee and thine  
One end awaits, Marpessa. Night by night  
The silent Boatman bears to silent shores  
The voiceless ghosts of lovers such as ye.  
My loves become immortal. Time nor Change  
Can touch those favor'd of the deathless gods.  
If thou wilt love me thou shalt dwell with me  
In everlasting splendor, and be praised  
By men yet formless in the Future's womb."  
But now Marpessa laugh'd. "Where Idas  
goes,  
My little ones must follow," she replied.  
"Shall I forsake them in that bitter place,  
And leave them lonely? Could a poet's song  
Make shame less shameful? Oh! thou knowest  
not,

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Bright god of morning, of the heart that is  
A wife's and mother's. Could I stay with thee  
And hear thee singing while mine own were  
crouch'd

In misty hell? And would thy kisses make  
My sorrow for their desolation less?  
Supreme art thou and very beautiful;  
But though thy lips have quiver'd with the song  
That thrills the holy cedars, in thy heart  
Abides no love, nor aught of tenderness  
If thus thou judgest women." And again  
She laugh'd to think how Idas worship'd her,  
And how she loved him. But, while yet she  
laugh'd,

Apollo seized her. "Thou art mine," he cried,  
And press'd his burning lips upon her own.

"Thy constancy shall vanish as the dew  
Forsakes its love, the pallid asphodel,  
When sunbeams woo it. When I sing to thee  
Thy pulse shall quicken; when my heart shall  
beat


Above thine own, thine eyes shall read in mine  
Such dreams as force forgetfulness of all  
Thy former dreamings. Thou shalt love me  
yet.

Thy hand shall yet caress me, and thy lips  
Shall cling to mine until all space shall seem  
Too tiny for our swooning." And while yet

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

The forest echo'd with her bitter cry,  
And all grew dark around her, in his arms  
Apollo bore his burden from the glade.

 IS listless dogs behind him, through the  
woods  
Strode Idas, singing. In a gloomy spot,  
Where never satyr sprawl'd beneath the trees  
Or teasing fauns dismay'd the restive deer,  
The lip-raised bear had met him. Silently  
They faced each other, and the waiting dogs  
Whined to attack their ancient enemy.  
Then from his bow the hunter shot a shaft  
That whizz'd its song of death, and in the throat  
Of it, the hunted, pitilessly lodged.  
And while the brown brute lunged to challenge  
them,  
The dogs sprang forward; but the bear was  
quick,  
And smote with thick and danger-dealing paws  
Its rash tormentors. One as suddenly  
Yelp'd and was dead; and then a second shaft,  
By Idas sped from his complaining bow,  
Smote the huge fury in its shaggy breast.  
And now it gave no heed to snapping jaws,  
But, dripping blood from not ignoble wounds,

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

O'erlook'd the baser things and sought the man,  
Its equal in the forest. With a roar  
That cow'd the dogs, the bear, uprear'd and  
straight,

Confronted Idas. But the spear was poised,  
The spear long envied of the Argonauts,  
And, loosed, it travell'd like a thunderbolt  
And smote the bear and drove him back again.  
Then through the vast and bloody cavity  
Pale Death rush'd in and chill'd its mighty  
heart,

And closed its angry eyes against the woods.  
And ere the hearten'd dogs could worry it  
The noble beast crash'd down, and was as still  
As is the fell'd tree, slaughter'd in its prime.

**B**UT when he reach'd his palace, and had cast  
His shoulder's burden on the gleaming  
stairs,

Marpessa did not greet him. Through the  
halls

He strode and call'd her, but his children's cries  
Apprised him she was absent. Then of them  
That eyed him mutely, faithful servitors  
Still proud to serve, he ask'd in curtest speech  
If one had seen her. But they still were dumb  
And shook their heads while looking on the  
ground.

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And though they search'd the palace, cried her  
name

And sought the gardens over, not a sign  
Of lost Marpessa brought the seekers joy.  
But when, at fault, they turn'd to pray the gods  
Reveal their secret; and with troubled eyes  
Their master follow'd them, a blind old hound  
Much favor'd of Marpessa bay'd the woods;  
And ever sniffing as she cross'd the grass  
Went slowly forward, baying as she went.  
Then Idas knew; and shouting to the slaves  
To guard his children as they would their lives,  
He grasp'd his spear and follow'd. Yard by  
yard

The hound went on, while Idas spoke to her,  
Impatient, yet all-grateful for her aid.  
And on and on, beneath the self-same pines  
That saw on other days such happenings  
As he might find delight in; through such glades  
Where Dian heard her moon-enamor'd maids  
Relate the day's adventures; how the deer  
Escaped their arrows, or a drowsy herd  
Gazed at their limbs with unbelieving eyes  
And fell asleep again. But Idas' thoughts  
Were fix'd on his Marpessa, and his gaze  
Was strain'd upon the distance. Bush and tree  
Seem'd fraught with menace to the one he loved,  
And therefore hateful; so he hurried on

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Behind the hound, and cheer'd her with his  
voice.

And once she whined, and turn'd, then turn'd  
again

And bay'd the louder; for her scent was keen  
Although her eyes were useless. Overhead  
The sun had cross'd the midline of the sky,  
And slanting beams now fill'd the drowsy woods  
With afternoon's still glory; bush and tree  
Alike seem'd golden, and a golden sheen  
Fell on the upturn'd faces of the flowers.  
But little now reck'd Idas of the hour,  
And little of its beauty. Ah! what sight  
Might blind his eyes when once the baying  
ceased

That now seem'd Hope's own music? Had the  
pool

Forever closed above her? Or would she,  
With lilies far less white and delicate  
Stare from its edge with fix'd unseeing eyes  
Upon the blue above them? Then he thought  
Of how the bear had almost conquer'd him,  
And saw her bruised and mangled in the fern.  
But on and on the blind hound, baying, went  
With Idas close behind her. Nearing now  
The shadow'd pool, his heart grew heavier;  
But while he steel'd himself to learn the fate  
Of all he loved and cherish'd, once again



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

The hound stood still and sniff'd uneasily  
The air about her. Then she whined and slunk  
To where her master waited, glooming now,  
His eyes so useless. Then again she sniff'd  
The air itself, unmindful of the grass,  
And seem'd at fault; but ever from the pool  
Would turn her head. And Idas petted her;  
But though she knew his meaning, on the grass  
She lay and whined with fine, uplifted head,  
And would not move. Then Idas left her there  
To seek behind the bushes, finding naught,  
And so came back, and watch'd her. Now he  
knew

That she was borne from that well-trodden path  
That cleft the forest to the shelter'd pool  
By some grim enemy, or beast or man;  
And while his hands were eager to bequeath  
Red death on aught that held her, in his heart  
Her face alone was imaged, only hers.  
But while he wonder'd at the hound's distress,  
And bade her seek and find again the scent,  
There came a first, faint puff of perfumed wind  
From off the mountains, and the hound leap'd  
up

Alert and silent; then she sniff'd again  
And ever grew more eager. And at last,  
When sure she seem'd of something, something  
hid



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

From Idas' understanding, through the woods  
Her full-mouth'd baying boom'd. Then on  
again,

With head erect as if her eyes could see,  
The faithful brute proceeded; ever on  
Now whining and now baying. And behind  
Strode eager Idas, firm-lipp'd, resolute,  
And hard his hand embraced his trusted spear.

THE sun was setting ere he came on them.  
While yet afar Marpessa heard the hound,  
And cried to Idas, knowing he was near.  
And he had leap'd to clasp her, calling her  
In tones that voiced his anguish, asking not  
Why thus he found her with the god of song;  
But scorning him and hating. But the god  
Still kept them parted, and had taunted him  
With mocking words, the while confronting  
him.

"Fly hence while yet thou mayst," he cried  
to him.

"Thy wife is mine. Death holds his shroud  
o'er thee;

But she has turn'd her glances to the heights  
Where I abide in splendor. Mine she is;  
And me she loves for my immortal song  
And all that makes me god-like." Hearing him,  
It seem'd to Idas that the gods had rock'd

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

The petty world, and that along with it  
He totter'd to destruction. In his ears,  
As booming seas may thunder in a cave,  
A roaring menace sounded, and he clutch'd  
The air about him wildly, giddily,  
And could not speak; could only clutch the air,  
And stare at her whose name he could not say  
Despite his heart's deep longing. But the voice  
Of pale Marpessa cried across the dusk:  
"I love thee, Idas! In its constancy  
My heart so steep'd is that it laughs at death.  
The wolf will better rear our little ones  
Than this bright Splendor who has threaten'd  
us;

And, rather than be his, and dwell in light,  
I'd feel once more thy lips upon mine eyes,  
Hear once thy voice assure me of thy love,  
And, with thine arm about me, seek the mists."  
And though he could not answer her as yet,  
He look'd his yearning, stunn'd and impotent  
To cry his grief, but longing to unite  
His iron hands around the marble throat  
Of him who ever eyed him with disdain.  
And still Apollo mock'd him: "She shall sit  
With me in glory, and shall lean to me  
When thou art long forgotten. At her feet  
I heap my gifts of immortality  
And love eternal. Go, while I am kind;

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Thy wife my love is. If I stare at thee  
Thy days are ended." And again she cried,  
As one who sees her loved one perishing:  
"I love thee, Idas, who art all to me;"  
And fain had touch'd him with her trembling  
hand,  
But could not. And while yet she gazed at  
him  
With love and anguish in the eyes so dear,  
He found his speech and thunder'd: "God thou  
art,  
But foul seducer also. In the woods  
Are they that hate thee—Isse, Chione,  
And Zephyrus, whom Hyacinthus scorn'd.  
Despite thy splendor, and thy gift of song,  
Loathsome thou art to things of purity,  
Defiler and vain boaster. In the skies  
Thy station is, to serve the Thunderer,  
Lest, anger'd, he chastise thee. Sweet thy  
hymns  
In ears that still are strangers to the songs  
Of earth's dear birds. The while thou gleamest  
there  
Thou art a menace, and the foe of all  
That makes our short-year'd life seem bearable.  
I hate thee, and would rid the woods of thee.  
Now aid thou me, great Zeus, a simple man,  
Yet righteous in my anger and my love.

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Guide thou my spear, and tip its point with  
death

That I may slay this robber, win mine own,  
And bless thee for thy succor." Swiftly then  
He hurl'd the dart, but slipp'd and saw it pierce  
An oak behind Apollo. And the god,  
Now bright with anger, tore the quiv'ring shaft  
From out the tree and posed to hurtle it  
Against defenceless Idas. Even now  
The mists were heavy in Marpessa's eyes,  
And she was praying for the man she loved,  
When lo! the shades were scatter'd. In their  
midst

Stood one of grave, majestic countenance,  
As golden as Apollo, but serene  
And conscious of his power. Then to the earth  
The spear was lower'd, and Marpessa's hand  
Was raised in supplication. But the eyes  
Of him that stood there were the eyes of one  
Who awed all men to silence, and her words  
Remain'd unutter'd in her anguish'd breast.  
Then, turning first to where Apollo gleam'd,  
He eyed him gravely. "Is dissension sweet,"  
He ask'd, and pointed to the lower'd spear,  
"That thus ye fight when from the western  
skies

My glory is departing? From the soil  
Sweet incense rises, and the trees are still'd

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

In solemn adoration. Even now  
The stars prepare to smile upon the world,  
And all is hush'd. The spear is in thy hand;  
Thy brow is anger'd. I await thy words."  
And then Apollo storm'd. "The maid is mine,  
I love her. She would share——" But Idas  
now

Strode hotly forward. "O great Zeus," he  
cried,

"The bright god lies! This woman is my wife,  
My loved Marpessa. We are wed, are one.  
Thy praise we sing together, and our babes  
Await her in their cradle. She is mine."  
And then the wroth Apollo frown'd at him:  
"If I but speak thou fallest at my feet,  
And hell shall open to receive thy ghost.  
Who, then, art thou to look me in the eyes  
And say: 'Thou liest'? I can harass thee  
And make thy days a torment. Thou shalt  
learn

My awful vengeance; thou shalt cry to me  
As Jason cried when hurried to his death."  
But Idas answer'd: "Nay, I fear thee not.  
A man I am, and I can die but once.  
Death has for me no terrors. Could I hold  
Thy gleaming hair, I'd stand erect in hell  
And deem my life well ended but to shout:  
'Behold Apollo, who would harm my wife!'"

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And then again Apollo raised his spear,  
But Zeus commanded and again it dropp'd.  
And then he turn'd to where Marpessa stood,  
All pale and trembling. "It shall rest with  
thee

To choose thy lover," said the grave-eyed god.  
"But ponder well before thou utterest  
Thy heart's desire. Beneath these gentle trees  
A hero claims thee, and a gleaming god.  
To each thou art a treasure, but to one  
Thyself thou givest. It shall rest with thee  
To choose thy destiny—to dwell on high  
Or on the earth that is a part of thee.  
Who loves Apollo must be sometimes sad.  
The song that trembles on his crimson lips  
Is heard by many and of many loved.  
The woods are his, the mountains. Where he  
goes

All hearts adore him, but he passes on  
To other conquests and to other loves.  
Apollo says he loves thee. If with him  
Thou goest hence, thou shalt immortal be;  
Shalt watch the birth of worlds, the vanishing  
Of all that now is bright and wonderful.  
Beside me thou shalt sit when life is done.  
The stars shall be thy children, and the winds  
Shall sing thy praises ere the dusk descends.  
And if thy choice be Idas, thou shalt know

## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

The even bliss of mortals and their griefs.  
The dawn shall wake thee, and the night shall  
bring  
Thy head unto its pillow where lies his  
Who shares with thee thy sorrow and thy  
joy.  
Thy babes will love thee, but shall sometime go  
Beyond the silent longing of thine eyes,  
Beyond thy hand's caresses. Even he,  
Whose hair turns whiter while thou kissest it,  
Must go at last; and thou must follow him,  
And bid farewell to light and all that made  
Thy little day seem perfect. Being gone  
Thou soon shalt be forgotten. Few are they  
Whose names are number'd with the names of  
stars;  
Thy little pleasure must be had to-day.  
For man is dust. His dreams are of the sky;  
But all the toys that bring him happiness  
Lie strewn between his cradle and his grave."  
And while he spoke, Marpessa forward lean'd  
As if to choose; but with commanding eyes  
The grave god held her while he spoke again.  
"Apollo's hand would raise thee to the heights;  
But Sorrow's face in airy solitudes  
Is not unknown, for she is everywhere  
Where hearts may beat. She, too, will follow  
thee



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

If thou with Idas goest. At her knees  
Ye both must kneel when that dark moment  
comes  
That comes alike to those whom Love makes  
one  
And those whom Love ne'er blesses. Choose  
thou now."  
And while Apollo eyed her haughtily,  
Too sure of conquest, Idas lean'd to her  
With outstretch'd arms, still hungry for her  
love  
And fearful she might leave him. But his  
doubt  
Was vain and idle, as a man's doubt is—  
Who learns what love is only when 't is lost;  
For, laughing now, Marpessa ran to him,  
Heedless of bright Apollo or of Zeus,  
And with her arms close-twined about his neck  
Cried: "Idas! O my Idas!" Thus they  
gazed  
In eyes where tears were welling; thus they  
stood  
To all oblivious save their happy selves,  
And said no word, but gazed, and gazed  
again.  
And when at last they turn'd, it was to find  
The gods had vanish'd and themselves alone.  
Alone they stood amid the leafy peace,



## IDAS AND MARPESSA

---

Beneath the skies where now gleam'd wondrously

The blessed star of Even; in their hearts  
The love that cares not what the future holds,  
Nor ever dreams of death; and at their feet  
The blind old hound, awaiting their caress.



# RHODANTHE





## RHODANTHE

**O**N Ida's slopes, that faced the gleaming  
sea,  
The forest nymphs were gather'd. On  
the grass

They lay and gossip'd, while above their heads  
The trees sway'd gently in the constant wind  
That troubled Ilium's hot and endless plain.  
Their task it was, and well it suited them  
Whose fair white limbs were tireless as the  
deer's,

To follow white Diana. When the sound  
Of winding horns awoke the solitudes  
Of mountain crests or valleys, like a flash  
They pass'd with her, their Mistress; in the  
dusk

They hid with her in places where no man  
Might dare to follow, places consecrate

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

To loveliness and rapture. There they sang  
Such songs as oft the solitary hears  
On nights of blue and silver, songs that seem  
Like whisp'ring waters or the sighs of leaves  
Lamenting joyous day's impermanence.  
But now alone they gossip'd. Where She  
stray'd

They knew not, nor might question; but,  
perhaps,

If over-long the mystery puzzled them,  
Pictured a dim retreat amid the fern,  
A shepherd woo'd from duty, and Herself  
Beside him list'ning to his youthful dreams.  
Where lay the nymphs the grass was still as  
cool

As when the sky first trembled, and the Night  
In silent flight look'd backward fearfully,  
Well knowing who was coming. For although  
The sun was toiling upward steadily,  
And all was hot around them, curtain-like  
The trees were arch'd above these whisp'ring  
nymphs,

Embow'ring them in shadow. At their feet  
A little stream fuss'd noisily to sea,  
Here splashing over bowlders, there at peace,  
And everywhere most joyous. Now and then  
A maid approach'd it, and with laughing eyes  
Beheld her own sweet beauty mirror'd there;

## RHODANTHE

---

Or cool'd her cheeks and dried them with her  
hair,  
Wherein the wind had left such fragrances  
As flowers exhale in rivalry with trees;  
Or quench'd her thirst and, turning, took her  
place  
Beside the one whose confidence she shared.

NOW, one there was in that chaste sisterhood  
Whose face so fair was that the nymphs  
themselves  
Would gaze at her in wonder; and the moths  
Whose wings disturb'd the breathlessness of  
night,  
Would pause above her, thinking they had  
found  
A strange, new flower so constant to the dark  
That only they might see it. She was one  
Whose birth the sea had witness'd; with its  
blue  
Her eyes were dower'd; its constant restless-  
ness  
Possess'd her heart and made her sometimes sad  
And sometimes joyous. But the face of her  
Was perfect ever, and as luminous  
As is the moon's on holy nights of June.  
And this same maid, Rhodanthe, on a day  
When, clapping hands beneath a smiling sun,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

The glinting waves raced shoreward, to the  
sands

Had wander'd idly. Was it Fate that drew  
Her white feet thither from the forest's shade,  
From peace and green seclusion? For, the  
while

Her eyes dream'd seaward, and herself seem'd  
lost

In heaving splendor, foam-tipp'd and as blue  
As was the sky above her, on the waves  
Up-borne by weeds she saw a white-brow'd  
youth

Whose eyes were closed apparently in death.  
Half couch'd upon the mass of green-gold weeds  
From monstrous gardens, where the awful swirl  
Of dim, deep waters sways them to and fro,  
And rends and heaves them upward, he was  
borne

Above the hungry clamor of the waves  
That threaten'd to engulf him. And the nymph  
With upraised hands call'd loudly to the gods  
To save so fair a thing, if in him burn'd  
The fickle flame that warms us when alive,  
And leaps away so suddenly at death.  
Then, plunging in, she swam with him to shore  
And laid the body on the warmer sand  
And rubb'd it till the eyes ope'd wearily;  
And closed again before the black of them



## RHODANTHE

---

Inform'd him of the mercy of the gods—  
Of all the love that brooded over him.  
For never yet had pale Rhodanthe seen  
So fair a thing in manhood. From afar  
The nymph had eyed the shepherds on the hills  
And thought them pleasing as they piped, or  
sang  
When dusk aroused their longings. Tall they  
were  
And strong of limb; but he, above whose form  
Her gaze now soften'd was a youth as fair  
As the blown foam about her, and his hair  
Was blacker than the panoply of Night.  
And while she touch'd those ivory cheeks of his  
A blush suffused them, as the tides of life  
Flow'd slowly back and warm'd them. Then he  
sigh'd.  
And while he sigh'd, with fringed eyes still  
closed  
Against Rhodanthe's beauty, to his mouth  
Her lips descended, drawn there by the pain  
Those lips had music'd. But he knew it not,  
Being as one who was not, one to whom  
Life is as nothing, and desire of life;  
As one who dreaming not is fortunate.  
And long she waited, tending him the while  
With hands so eager and solicitous  
He must have thrill'd beneath them, eyeing him

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

With ardent looks, yet modest; half-afraid  
That when he woke, the sea, his enemy,  
Would lure him thence and leave her desolate.  
For oft, while list'ning to the whisper'd tales  
Of nymphs at sundown while she bound her  
hair,

The maid had wonder'd why Diana frown'd  
To hear them talk of shepherds, and of loves  
In silent, leafy places. Like as not,  
If still they whisper'd of forbidden things,  
The Goddess bade them rise and follow her  
From glade to glade, until the hopeless moon  
Peep'd through its fleecy veil and bade them  
sleep.

And sometimes when she near'd the haunts of  
men,

While shelter'd by the olives, she had seen  
A youth beside a maiden, looking not  
At stars or flowers; but ever, hand in hand,  
Treading the path with eyes that gazed in eyes  
To all oblivious save the loved one near.  
And telling this to them that question'd her  
When gleam'd the stars, they told her it was  
love

That drew the twain together; and they sigh'd,  
And thought, perhaps, of babes that should  
have lain

In arms where naught might nestle, and of lips

## RHODANTHE

---

Whose warmth might bring forgetfulness of  
death.

And while she listen'd to the idle talk  
Of nymphs as discontented as herself,  
Her gaze roved elsewhere; for her years were  
few,

And love to her was still a mystery,  
Along with pale Diana's loveliness  
And Pan's inconstant piping. Blest indeed  
Had she but known it. Death is pitiless;  
But who shall say that Love is merciful  
While hearts still suffer, and a lover's grief  
Might draw compassion from the very stones!

THE day still golden was when he awoke  
And look'd at her in wonder. From his  
side

She shrank dismay'd, and drew her wind-blown  
hair

About her bosom, while her eyes were fix'd  
Upon the sands beside him. But he lean'd  
And touch'd her hand. "Oh! who art thou?"  
he cried,

In tones so soft it seem'd to her that his  
No voice of mortal was, but of a god  
Who soon would leave her. "All I owe to  
thee—

The air, this blessèd sunshine, and the sight

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Of thy chaste loveliness. Oh! who art thou?  
Perhaps I dream? Perhaps thou art a thing  
As frail and unsubstantial as the mist  
That mocks me on the waters in the dawn?  
Perhaps—Yet no. Oh! say not I am dead.  
Thy flesh is warm; thy cheeks are delicate  
As is the wild-rose, and thy gaze is kind.  
I know this sea; this wind has been my friend  
Since erst the gentle Hours were 'ware of me—  
Oh! tell me that I live, and who thou art.”  
Then, looking up, she answer'd: “From the sea  
I drew thee here, O thou, most beautiful,  
The gods had envied thee thy loveliness  
And wish'd thy youth to grace the underworld,  
Where heavy Age and grey Unhappiness  
Bemoan the vanish'd day. I drew thee here  
And won thee back to living. In the woods  
I am the nymph Rhodanthe. Night and day  
I tend Diana. I—But say thy name”;  
(And now she whisper'd in her eagerness)  
“Oh! let me hear the music of thy name  
That I may know how loveliness is call'd,  
And sing it softly when the stars are out,  
And cedarn fragrances delight the woods  
But make me conscious of my loneliness.”  
But he, who eyed her still as though she were  
A frail white flower, new-risen from the sands,  
Could only murmur as he gazed at her:

## RHODANTHE

---

“Rhodanthe!” And if thou who readest this  
Hast sadly mused o’er one name’s melody  
In desolation’s slowly-creeping hour,  
Thy heart shall tell thee all the thoughts of him  
Who eyed that little maid so long ago.

“Rhodanthe!” Oh! the tenderness of it.  
So long ago it was. Yet see her there,  
Awaken’d love’s first wonder in her eyes  
And love’s first sorrow shadowing her mouth—  
So small a thing when measured by its joy,  
So drawn, so very drawn in wistfulness.  
She fears him not, but closer leans to him  
With hands half-hidden in the golden sand,  
Unconscious in her flower-like innocence.  
And while he whispers yet again her name,  
The fickle sea that erst had menaced him  
Now rolls in foamy worship at her feet  
And charms her with its music. And at last,  
When he had said that pretty name of hers  
In all love’s varied accents, and her sighs .  
Recall’d him from his dreaming, of himself  
He told the story. “Chromis call thou me,  
The son of Polyclea. On the shore  
Not far from Troy my hut is, and each morn  
Beneath the ghostly draperies of the mist  
I drag my nets upon the restless sea  
For daily food. When I was but a babe  
The waters lured my father to his death,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

A brother, too; and I had follow'd them,  
This very day had sigh'd where now they sigh,  
But thou, Rhodanthe of the lower'd eyes  
And wind-enamor'd tresses, savedst me  
To wonder at thy beauty. Chromis holds  
No note of magic; if thou sayest it  
The stars shall note me and the gods look  
down

To see who bears a name so musical.”  
And speaking thus he touch'd her hand again,  
Yet ah! so tenderly. And she look'd up  
But eyed the sea, half-fearful of his gaze,  
Though dreaming of him ever. Then again  
He cried: “Rhodanthe!” And the winds  
withdrew

That Love's swift arrows might the straighter  
fly,

For so the gods had will'd it. Then she turn'd,  
And look'd at him who on his bended knees  
Beheld no more the glory of the sea;  
Who paid no heed to the descending sun  
Or aught that was around him, seeing her  
Who gleam'd beside him. And at last she  
spoke,

And sad the voice was of the little maid:  
“I hear thee speak, and yet I hear thee not.  
Thy voice is softer than the call at night  
Of dove to dove; and, hearing, I forget

## RHODANTHE

---

Each treasur'd word. Oh! say my name again,  
For never yet has nymph so utter'd it;  
And though Diana loves me, and has bound  
These wanton tresses with her own cool hands,  
Her voice is stern. Ah! say my name again,  
And I'll say thine. O Chromis, say my name!"  
And now, by that strange law that ever draws  
Inconsequential stars to greater suns,  
And drift upon the bosom of the deep  
To other drift of greater magnitude,  
So these two children of the woods and sea  
Were drawn together. But as yet they sigh'd  
And only look'd their longing. With her hand  
She touch'd the locks that gloom'd above his  
brow,

And whisper'd: "Chromis!"; and his own lay  
soft

Upon her frail cheek's whiteness as he cried:  
"Rhodanthe! O Rhodanthe!" Then she sigh'd  
And lean'd away. "The wind in leafless trees  
No sadder than thy voice is," she replied.

"The world is now most beautiful to me  
Because the utter'd music of thy name  
Has made me think of Spring; is mine so sad  
That thus thou sayest it? And yet, again,  
Oh! say 'Rhodanthe.' Thou hast charmèd me  
And taught me of a strange and honey'd pain  
Whereof I suffer when thou silent art."



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

But now he rose, and leaning over her,  
Press'd her head backward till he saw her eyes,  
Now wet with tears. "O tender nymph," he  
cried,

"O white Rhodanthe! If my voice is sad  
Thine eyes are sadder. When thou worshipest  
The laughing Spring, with white and leaping  
lambs

And shy-eyed flowers and fresh-apparell'd trees,  
Are thus thy blue eyes tear'd? And is thy  
mouth,

As now it is, a bow of wistfulness?"

But saying naught, she only closed her eyes  
Against the yearning question of his face,  
And dream'd in darkness. But he sensed her  
dream

And kneel'd again beside her. And the while,  
Loosed from its fringed nest, each exiled tear  
Dropp'd to its doom, his arms had circled  
her

And, cheek by cheek, they thought no more of  
time.

"Rhodanthe!" he had whisper'd. "Let thine  
eyes

Behold my worship. Ah! far bluer they  
Than nodding corn-flowers or the hyacinths  
That smell the sweetest when the stars are out.  
Rhodanthe! Thou my love art." As he spoke



## RHODANTHE

---

His voice became a whisper. Overhead  
The sky was now as soft as were the hearts  
That beat beneath it, for Day's chronicler  
Had seen the crowning of Love's purposes  
And now was hasting westward; and the sea  
Had ceased its azure revelry, and lay  
Expectant of Night's unimpassion'd kiss.  
And then, as Chromis laid upon her hair  
His trembling hand, half-fearful of its weight,  
And sigh'd his longing, to his lips she placed  
Her low, cool brow, and said, as one in prayer:  
"I love thee too, O Chromis. Cherish me!"

AND fain had Chromis borne his love away  
When dawn peep'd in upon their resting  
place  
Of shelt'ring fern. Throughout one fragrant  
night,  
They dream'd, as lovers may, of other things  
Than we may dream of, who with hopeless eyes  
Await To-morrow's verdicts, and the gifts  
Too long delay'd to prove desirable.  
For they were young; and then, they were in  
love.

And though the sky was scintillant with stars,  
Each eager to behold them; and the moon,  
Late hasting on her ever-hopeless quest,  
Held for their sakes her beauty from the world,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And seem'd no larger than a silvern leaf  
Upon the walks of heaven, of love alone  
They thought that first, fleet night that made  
          them one.

But when the birds aroused them, and the light  
Reminded of Diana, to his lips  
Rhodanthe lean'd. "Belovèd, it is day,"  
She whisper'd sadly, "and the woods awake;  
And I must hence before She seeks for me  
Among my sisters. See! I kiss thy hair,  
And place my hand upon thy crimson lips  
That droop in sorrow. Should I perish now  
I would not murmur; for my memories  
Are mine forever, and the mists of hell  
Would seem all-golden while I dream'd of thee.  
Day bids me leave thee. But the night shall  
          find

Us twain together. Oh! I'll come to thee  
Though Styx's waters part us; if the earth  
Were strewn about with crystal-pointed stars  
I'd pick my way across them just to see  
Thy dear eyes' welcome and thy loveliness."  
Then swiftly upward springing she was gone,  
And Chromis, ere he knew it, was alone.

## RHODANTHE

---

**B**UT Cos, the shepherd, brown and sap-  
ling-straight,  
Had loved Rhodanthe since he startled  
her

One morning on the uplands. Where the winds  
Danced wildest on the grasses, and the flowers  
Nodded their heads to airs so fanciful  
No pipe might play them, with her teasing hair  
The nymph was busied. So she saw him not,  
Who stood and wonder'd if so fair a thing  
Were earth or sea-born, or if he but dream'd  
Such dreams as sometimes haunt one in the day.  
And when at last, that mad hair being held  
In sweet subjection, from the wind she turn'd  
To loiter woodward, on his oaken staff  
She saw him leaning, and had straightway fled  
Had he not call'd her. Even then she stood  
Alert for flight, as stands the fearful fawn  
When first it hears the menace of the hound;  
But when he spoke she eased her anxious foot  
And fear'd him not. "Oh! loose thy golden  
hair,"

The youth had cried. "No eyes save mine may  
see

The sunbeams toss'd and tangled by the wind.  
For thou a goddess art, about whose brows  
Day's glory hovers, and the brows of thee

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Are chaste as is the azure of the sea.”  
And she to tease this child of solitude,  
This idler in the sunshine, laugh’d at him,  
And gave the winds, the still desirous winds,  
Her hair to wreak their will on. And again  
They rush’d to where she waited, swaying her  
As they might sway a lily, and on high  
Swirl’d her bright hair until its golden sheen  
Seem’d like the mist whence issue new-born suns.  
Then Cos, the shepherd, dropp’d his oaken staff,  
But could not voice his longings, and the  
nymph  
Had danced before him; and while yet he stood  
As one afraid of utter loveliness,  
Had turn’d and vanish’d, laughing, down the  
glade.

AND once again he saw her, as she bent  
One golden morning, o’er a daffodil,  
Expectant of Diana. Through the pines  
He spied upon her beauty, questioning  
If aught so fair would ever kneel with him  
Where violets breathed sweet fragrance on the  
air;  
Where lilies white and blue forget-me-nots  
Whisper’d their dreams, while gaudy crocuses  
Laugh’d at the shy and pale anemone.  
And wond’ring thus, forgetful of his sheep,

## RHODANTHE

---

The shepherd sigh'd, a sigh so pitiful  
It seem'd all grief was homed within his  
heart.

And, half-afraid, Rhodanthe turn'd to him,  
But laugh'd as suddenly. "O silly Cos!"  
She cried across the sunshine; "I can see  
Thy mournful eyes behind the veil of green;  
I see thy wolf's skin and thy shepherd's crook.  
O gentle Cos, come forth. I fear thee not."  
Then Cos came forth, but slowly; and remain'd  
Beside the trees that erst had shelter'd him;  
And could not speak, until she ask'd of him  
Why thus he sigh'd. "The morn is golden-  
wing'd,

And yet thou sighest. Hast thou lost thy sheep  
That thus thy cheek is hollow'd? From thy  
brow

Care drives what dreams should sit there, and  
thine eyes

Like lanterns are that hold no friendly light."  
And he had laid his shepherd's staff aside  
And pull'd a reed from out his shaggy pouch,  
Then eyed her shyly. "In the woods," he said,  
"I hear sweet music. I will play for thee,  
Because my mood is sadder than thine own,  
The memories of autumn-sober'd trees."  
But while he play'd, Rhodanthe laugh'd at him.  
"What knowest thou of forest mysteries?"

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

She cried to him. "Thy sheep may list to thee;

But thou, a man, art dull-ear'd. I have heard  
The bud's first whisper'd hopes; the songs of  
leaves

In fullest summer when the air was bright  
With golden promise. I have heard their sighs  
When slowly falling to the lap of earth  
They mourn'd their little hour, so quickly sped.  
And I have seen the brown-robed multitudes  
With winter's snows upon them, still'd at last,  
And dreaming not of sorrows nor of joys.  
Strange things I know; but thou a shepherd art  
With large, deaf ears, and eyes that nothing see  
Except thy sheep. Thy limbs are brown and  
strong;

Thy hair is wilder than a Mænad's song  
And golden as Apollo's in the dawn;  
Then put thy pipe away and tell me why  
Thy cheek so hollow is, thine eye so sad?"  
And he, abash'd, and wounded by her mirth,  
Had play'd no more; but stood with wistful  
eyes

Beside the laurels that had shelter'd him;  
And gazed at her. Thus dies a singer's song  
When star-ward soaring in his eagerness  
The singer hears the earth-chain'd mouthe at  
him,

## RHODANTHE

---

Hating his flights and envious of the song  
That seeks to lead them upward to the free.  
But soon he spoke. "Thy name Rhodanthe is.  
Last night, ere yet the silver-hornèd moon  
Slipp'd from her low-swung couch to climb the  
skies

And count her stars, I wander'd in the woods,  
Alone and heavy-hearted. On the air  
I heard a music as of homing bees,  
Each moment coming nearer; to the sound  
I strain'd my ear, and lo! two voices then  
Were born of that sweet humming. In the fern  
I threw me down, and scarce each startled frond  
Resumed its calm when through the stilly dusk  
Two figures flash'd. And one of them was  
thine.

But ere ye vanish'd I, with eager eyes,  
And beating heart and eagle-wingèd feet,  
Was hasting after, fearless of the thorns  
But fearful lest a stray, embitter'd twig  
Might cry my presence to thy tiny ears.  
But on ye sped, oft laughing; and at last,  
When almost spent, as is the hound-heel'd stag,  
I thought to run no longer, to a glade  
Ye sudden came and dropp'd from out my  
sight."

But now Rhodanthe, who had heard his tale  
With eyes of mirth and mischief, cried to him



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Across her gather'd daffodils: "O Cos!  
If Pan had caught thee he had sent lean wolves  
To harm thy sheep; had bound thee to an oak  
With sappy creepers till Diana came  
And chill'd thy pulses, turning thee to stone  
To punish thy presumption." But the youth  
Was dreaming now. "I only thought of  
thee,"

He almost whisper'd. "Now, most fearfully,  
From tree to tree I glided, and at last  
Through bushes peeping saw such loveliness  
As stars may sing of, or the winds describe  
When gods grow weary. Maids so beautiful  
Were gather'd there, it seem'd the Night had  
lured

Her chastest votaries from hidden dells,  
Where naught beholds them save the things that  
dream

In utter stillness of forest loves."  
But now he look'd with ardent eyes at her,  
With eyes wherein Hope's eager light still  
burn'd

And longing glisten'd. "On the grass," he  
sigh'd,

"Thy sisters lay like lilies; thou alone  
Wert kneeling, and the blessèd face of thee  
Seem'd like a wistful star. And while I watch'd  
With beating heart, one call'd thee by thy name,



## RHODANTHE

---

And all the trees around me, e'en the leaves  
That press'd against my body seem'd to cry:  
'Rhodanthe!' And while yet I linger'd there  
I heard afar the owl's portentous hoot  
That tells Diana's coming; ere I fled  
To where the blackest woods might hide from  
me

All sights except my pictured dreams of thee,  
I saw her face. But thine is lovelier!"  
And while she laugh'd, and hid her daffodils  
Beneath her golden tresses, he advanced  
Still pleading dumbly with his outstretch'd  
hands

For that which seems to youth the anodyne  
For all this pain of living. But again  
The nymph, retreating slowly, laugh'd at him,  
Although less kindly. "Thou hast seen," she  
said,

"Such things as are forbidden, silly Cos.  
Hast thou not heard of uncontrollèd men  
With snowy hair belied by iron limbs,  
Who nothing know of human fellowship,  
But live alone till Death shall beckon them?  
These men have seen Diana. They have long'd  
For things beyond them as the wind's beyond  
Their fingers' idle clutching. Now they shock  
The night with hollow laughter, or dismay  
The bloodless snake with eyes that never close;

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

They wake the woods with hard and hollow  
    song,  
Or whisper vainly to the tree and star.  
O silly Cos, thy secret lies with me;  
But go thou now, and let thy gentle eyes  
Find otherwheres their pleasure. When thou  
    canst,  
Forget Rhodanthe. On his moveless back  
Old Atlas bears the burden of the world;  
But naught so heavy is as hopeless love—  
And thou art but a shepherd.” Then she fled.

**B**UT Cos stay'd on beneath the self-same  
    pines  
That erst had heard her laughter. On the  
    sword  
He crouch'd and brooded, dreaming still of  
    her—  
As Night may dream of her evanish'd Day,  
As hopeless men still dream of what is lost.  
It almost seem'd she stood there, slimly white  
Amid the leafy hush, and lily-straight;  
Upon her breast the envied daffodils,  
Shelter'd from truant breezes by her hair;  
A maid in whom a god might find delight;  
Whose presence lent a beauty to a world  
Already lovely but already sad.  
But e'en as dropp'd the unconcernèd sun

## RHODANTHE

---

Behind the purple mountains, and the skies  
Turn'd ever blacker, so the loveliness  
Of life became illusion unto Cos  
And all his thoughts the thoughts of blighted  
trees.

And still he crouch'd there like a thing of stone  
Until all love had died within his heart  
And his the torment was of one in hell.  
And brooding thus there grew in him a hate  
Of all fair things, of life, of love itself,  
And even of Rhodanthe. In the dark  
He crouch'd and gloom'd the while the Hours  
pass'd

Above his awful silence; and at last  
When Dawn was come, sprang quickly to his  
feet,

Storm'd at the grey with horror-clutching  
hands

And call'd the curses of the gods on her.  
Then through the woods he stumbled, noting  
not

The pensive ferns or that embroidery  
With which the soil is cover'd, color'd leaves  
And modest creepers, and the woodsy blooms  
With eyes still closed against morn's joyous-  
ness.

For now it seem'd a more Titanic load  
Than ever Atlas shoulder'd for his pride

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Now bore him down. If wedged with meteors,  
Cool'd constellations and all cosmic dust,  
The heavy world in star-high balances  
Be weigh'd against one woe-cramm'd human  
heart,

That heart will swing those others to the skies  
And crack the scales in falling. Through the  
woods

He blindly stumbled, sometimes cursing her  
Whose laughter he remember'd, whose rebuke  
Seem'd hot as flame around him; even now,  
Though she was gone, and all alone he was  
Save for the silent, mirthless ministrants  
That sniff the steps of Madness and Despair.

AND though from dawn till dusk Rho-  
danthe flash'd

With white Diana through the greenery,  
Stopping at times when lured by Pan's sweet  
pipes

Or when the Huntress bade her maidens rest,  
Night found her with her lover. In the woods  
Are silent places where a whisper'd tale  
Sounds sweeter far than music; glades and dells  
Wherein a constant bird may mourn its mate  
With song that wakes our saddest memories  
And hints its kinship with us. These they  
knew,

## RHODANTHE

---

And hid there, heedless of the peeping stars,  
Or roving winds; for stars and roving winds  
Are lovers' friends, and mourn eternally  
The hopes that are as fated as the leaves.  
But what knows Youth of Fate? The very bird  
Whose heart is broken is a feather'd joy  
To him whose heart is whole with happiness;  
An envied thing, at liberty to soar  
In wide, blue fields of freedom. And the winds,  
Whose mournful voices to our duller ears  
Remind of what is over, unto her  
Whose eyes dream upward sing of things to be.  
And though the woods were ever beautiful  
To Chromis and Rhodanthe, in themselves  
Abode the charm that ever lured their eyes  
To one another. As he lean'd to her,  
Such words he murmur'd as can change the  
night

To the blest dusk of lovers. "On thy cheeks  
I see thy mournful lashes," he had said.  
"So fair thy face, they lie there in dark peace,  
Bearing thy white lids downward. Look at me,  
O sweet Rhodanthe, for they rest too long—  
I envy e'en thy lashes!" But her hands  
Now clasp'd his face, and she no more look'd  
down.

"Though closed mine eyes," she whisper'd,  
"thee I see,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Belovèd Chromis. Thou art everywhere  
Because thy face is pictured in my heart  
Since first I saw thee. When Diana calls  
In the cool hush of morning, by my side  
Thou treadest lightly; though I follow fast  
Her horn's defiance to the hidden boar,  
Thou runnest with me. Once I look'd behind,  
Expectant of thy presence. Fickle one,  
I see thee ever, though mine eyes be closed."  
And he was happy. "In the dawn," he said,  
"I sing new songs. The sea reminds of thee.  
Thine eyes have languish'd in the happy waves,  
Bequeathing them their color. White the foam  
As is thy moon-bright body, and at times  
My lilting boat is mesh'd in wondrous weeds  
That gleam as does thy sun-enamor'd hair.  
Should aught befall to sunder thee from me,  
I could not live, Rhodanthe. From the skies  
The stars might lean at Even breathlessly,  
And lilies upward gaze expectantly;  
But never more would song of mine disturb  
The drowsy calm between the flower and star  
If I no more possess'd thee. Speak to me!"  
"Thou wouldst but sing the better," she re-  
plied.  
"Thy song would tell the world thy constancy,  
And many men would love thee. In thy heart  
Thy love would turn to sympathy and song;

## RHODANTHE

---

And though a sorrow linger'd in thine eyes  
Thy love would keep thee straight as is the fir,  
And ever fragrant. Ah! When I am gone—"  
But while she spoke he kiss'd her, silencing  
Her drooping lips before the night was told  
The woe she presaged. "Thou art all to me,"  
He breathed upon their crimson. "From the  
woods

I soon shall take thee. Thou shalt come with  
me

To where my seaward-looking hut awaits  
Its perfect mistress. There no drunken Pan,  
No stern Diana with the chilling eyes,  
Can ever find thee. Thou shalt sing to me  
And whisper of the one that is to be  
While, mending nets, I kneel as now I kneel  
Beside thee, sweet Rhodanthe." And again  
He kiss'd and kiss'd her, till her cheeks, erst  
pale,

Were warm as summer's roses; but her eyes,  
That gazed beyond him, seeing but the dark,  
Unknown to him were sadder than before.  
And when she spoke it was as one who is  
Too wise to be quite happy. "Thou and I"—  
And oh! how now her eyes were fix'd on him—  
"Are but the playthings of the older gods.  
With them it rests to say what things shall be  
Beyond the moment. Kiss me, my Belov'd,



And in thine arms' sure haven gather me.  
 I love thee well; but thou and I must bow  
 To them that sit in judgment. Even now  
 Perhaps they mock us, and bid Death prepare  
 The bitter cup that cures all mortal ills,  
 But ends what joys we gather as we pass."  
 Then close she nestled to the lad she loved.  
 And he close held her, sighing in her ear  
 Such words as lovers utter while the world  
 Rolls on its course unheeding; while the Hours  
 All-swiftly pass, and while the air is fill'd  
 With shimm'ring music, as of wings unseen,  
 Or faintest waves on far, uncharted shores.

O HALF-HEARD silences of holy Night,  
 Suggestive and appealing! Idle lie  
 Day's golden shawms that blare in wearied ears  
 Insistent pæans for the conquerors  
 Of stern and hard-eyed Fate; and silent are  
 The herald trumpets of the scornful sun.  
 From airy heights ye tremble over us,  
 From heights wherein the unpretentious moon  
 Whispers pale prayer above all things that are,  
 Above all things that slumber while they pass  
 The common way and wait the common doom.  
 Your toneless music soothes the anguish'd  
     heart  
 Of hopeless love; like benediction's calm



## RHODANTHE

---

It falls upon earth's lovers, as they search  
The starry fields of promise over them;  
It stills the voice of protest, and of grief.  
O half-heard silences of holy Night,  
Suggestive and appealing! From the skies  
Drift, drift to us forever. Fill our hearts  
With that sweet peace whereof the ancient trees  
Have fullest understanding; in our ears  
Whisper the soft and blessed harmonies  
The fearless flowers rejoice in. Then when  
flares

The crimson fire along the waken'd East,  
And paling stars with backward glances go  
Beyond our eyes' vain searching, we shall be  
As men whose souls made strong by olden song  
May bear To-day; as men who having heard  
Imperious music, feel that they are gods,  
And go their way rejoicing, scorning death.

**A**ND when their chosen bower seem'd all  
a-shine  
With filter'd moonlight, and the slumb'ring  
blooms

Exhaled their faint, illusive fragrances,  
On fern-hid elbows Chromis raised himself  
And eyed the nymph, now utterly asleep.  
And watching her he thought of how men said  
Love's Goddess was of all things beautiful

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

The one most lovely ; but beholding now  
The maid beside him, still and marbly-white,  
Shook his dark locks above her and was glad.  
Upon her arm her perfect head reclined,  
Her golden tresses coil'd above a face  
So fair, so fond, and yet so innocent  
That he grew fearful lest he only dream'd,  
So bent and kiss'd her. And while yet his lips  
Lay warm on hers, like rose on willing rose,  
She op'd her eyes and drew him down to her  
While murmurs proved love's sweet reality.  
"I dream'd of thee," she whisper'd. "Thou  
and I

On such an island that from milky cliffs  
Rises all green and golden, palm'd and still  
As the warm sea around it, lived and loved  
Unheeded by and heedless of grey Time.  
No chilling eyes, our kisses envying,  
There chill'd our ardor; there no eager ears  
Lean'd to our broken whispers; and the while  
On morns of gold or eves of violet  
We told our dreams, the air no echoes bore  
Of iron laughter or of hopeless mirth.  
And much we learn'd of lambs, and gentle ewes  
And the dear stars above us; and at last,  
Grown old together, we prepared to sleep,  
As trees prepare when hoary Winter blows  
Ionian dirges on his sombre pipes."

## RHODANTHE

---

"I, too, have dream'd," the youth said tenderly.

"My dreams were such as men, despite day's  
glare,

May dream with open eyes. On no such isle  
As thy sweet fancy painted did we dwell,  
But yonder where the sea beats noisily  
By night and day. The woods have frighten'd  
thee,

O sweet Rhodanthe, with their stillness  
That hints of death; the pale anemones  
Are fearful of Diana, and the winds  
Moan in the pines because she never loves.  
But yonder—thou canst see them through the  
trees—

My golden sands await thee. Never there  
Comes stern Diana; but if thou wouldst hear,  
Grown weary of the thunder of the sea,  
Pan's lesser music, I will bring thee here,  
And, hidden, thou shalt hear it. Thus I  
dream'd

The while I watch'd thee." "Thou art beautiful,"

The nymph replied, and drew him close to her.

"All else forget except that thou and I  
Are now together. If the trees could tell  
How oft I cry thy name, thy heart would grieve  
For poor Rhodanthe, who, though loving thee,  
Must sorrow ever." And the youth was still

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

As was the night about them, knowing not  
Why thus she grieved, or why, though loving  
him,

The woods still kept his loved one from his arms.  
“Thine eyes are wet, Belovèd!” Chromis  
sigh’d;

“Upon thy cheek I see the fallen tear  
That tells a sorrow thou wouldst hide from me.  
Thy voice is sadder than the hopeless note  
Of the lone bird above us. For its mate  
It mourns and mourns; but I am close to thee  
To whisper of To-morrow, of the years  
That wait us with bright gifts and happiness.”  
Then closer still Rhodanthe clung to him.  
“To-morrow is this moment’s enemy,  
Sweet Chromis,” she had answer’d. “Ere the  
moon

Enters her eastern wicket, thou and I  
May hear no more the bird’s sad melody,  
Or with slow kisses kindle into flame  
Our willing passion. When the dawn is come,  
Amid what greyness may our whispers sound,  
While the bright gods, who send us to our doom,  
Forget that we existed.” But the youth  
Now kiss’d her eyes. “I only think of thee  
And of thy tender beauty,” whisper’d he.  
“The Now and the To-morrow are as one;  
And Time is but a phantom when with thine

## RHODANTHE

---

My kisses mingle. But the gods are good,  
Else had I sunk to silence and despair  
That golden day which brought thee to my  
arms."

"E'en now I hear that first, low sigh of thine,"  
Rhodanthe murmur'd. "On mine ear it fell  
Like faintest music, and my heart awoke  
Before thine eyes were open'd to the world."

"Thy love it was that lured me back," he cried;

"My undecided spirit saw thy face,

And so I lived." "Then love me," she replied;

"Ah! dream not of To-morrow. Love me now.

The Hours are full of menace; trust them not.

If sad I seem the while in thine embrace,

Or if I weep a little, pay no heed,

But love me, love me ever. Who shall say

Why woman's love is mainly mystery,

While man's is only passion? Love me, then.

Beneath this couch of asphodel and fern

What hopeless ones may wander, unto whom

No joy descends, no whispers warm as wine,

No murmurs of love's happy discontent.

Already elsewhere, Chromis, it is light,

And Day no friend is of unhappy loves.

Too soon the woods shall waken. Thou shalt

hear,

While yet thou sailest seaward, winding horns,

Affrighted cries, shrill laughter, and the noise

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Of red-mouth'd hounds; but I, with flying feet  
And heavy heart must follow where She leads,  
Nor ever hope to hear thy voice again."

But Chromis dream'd above her. "With the  
night

Thy feet shall lead thee hither, where I'll wait  
With strained gaze thy gleaming through the  
dusk.

The frightened birds, while yet thou art afar,  
Shall sing: 'She comes.' The winds shall bear  
to me

Thy hair's rare fragrance; and, when overhead  
The unimpassion'd moon on this sweet bower  
Looks mildly down, thy sighs shall mix with  
mine

And naught shall be remember'd but our love."  
And then they kiss'd; and she forgot a while,  
As lovers may, the envy of the gods  
And Fate's fell purpose; and the ruthlessness  
That makes men eager for the end, and night.

**A**ND one still dawn, when from the self-  
same bower

Rhodanthe slipp'd to seek the other maids  
Before Diana call'd them; while the woods  
So silent were she heard her heart's quick beat

## RHODANTHE

---

Whene'er she stopp'd, half-fearful, at her feet  
There fell a grey, wild pigeon, wounded sore  
And near to death. And wond'ring who would  
slay

So soft a thing, she stoop'd and lifted it  
From where it lay upon the dew-cool grass.  
"Poor bird," she said, "thy mate now waits  
for thee

Within her wind-rock'd nest; but all alone  
The risen moon shall find her. Through the  
dusk

Her eyes shall peer, but thou shalt never hear  
That low, sad cry of hers, nor shall she learn  
Why never thou repliest." Then against  
Her bosom once she held it, where it gasp'd,  
And suddenly was still. Then looking up,  
With eyes that match'd the sorrow of her  
mouth,

She saw the shepherd Cos awaiting her,  
And started back. Upon his matted hair  
Strange weeds were heap'd in semblance of a  
crown,

And flame disturb'd the peace of his mild eyes  
And made their gaze appalling. Slowly then,  
With arms upraised and brows of inward storm,  
He moved upon her. "Merope!" he cried,  
"Lost star of heaven! In dream last night it  
seem'd



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

I heard Orion thunder thou wert dead  
And lost to us forever." And the nymph  
Had drawn away, dismay'd and terrified.  
"I know her not," she whisper'd. "I am she  
Whose face once pleased thee; thou hast soon  
forgot  
Rhodanthe! Let me pass thee." But the  
youth  
Laugh'd mirthlessly, advancing. "Thou," he  
cried,  
"That Pleiad art for which the heavens have  
cast  
Their nets of silver on impassion'd nights,  
Yet ever vainly. Years I search for thee.  
From Proserpine's grey gardens, thick with  
griefs,  
I have flown upward to the whirling stars  
And sought thee on bright highways; I have  
sail'd  
Wide, restless seas; have stagger'd under them  
With all their heavy hate upon my back  
And menaced by more awful things than ghosts.  
And ever crying 'Merope!' I braved  
The crack'd abysses of the Caucasus  
Where Harpies hide by daylight. But of thee  
No trace I gather'd. Yet—" (and now he  
press'd  
His heart, and gazed about him) "yet it seems



## RHODANTHE

---

That long ago, while yet the stars were young  
And we could hear their singing, thou and I  
Were met amid such leafery as this."

But now Rhodanthe stopp'd, and cried to him,  
Grown fearful of his madness: "Cos! dear Cos!  
Thou art an idle shepherd. In the woods  
Thy sheep will wander if thou hastest not  
To lead them to the uplands. I am she  
Who teased thee once—Rhodanthe. See my  
hair!

It gleams to-day as when I danced for thee  
And left thee longing for forbidden things."  
But Cos had frown'd at her the while she spoke.  
"This morning's star acclaim'd me Sisypheus,  
Thy lord and master. On my head I wear  
My kingly crown, and hid in yonder bush  
My sceptre lies. O risen orb of Day!  
Scorner of weak mortality, of things  
Transient as summer's gladness and the dreams  
That light the thick'ning gloom of petty man,  
Behold the beauty of my Merope;  
Burn through the blue of heaven so wide a track  
That she and I this night may mount by it  
To that high station where her sisters wait  
And mourn these many æons. See!" he cried,  
His eyes ablaze with madness, and his arms  
Uplifted like sear'd branches to the blue,  
"The sun arises from his couch of pearl

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

To tell the world that Merope is here  
And the swart face of Night shall gleam at last  
As with a new-found glory. Fill, O Winds,  
Titanic trumpets from your swollen cheeks  
And blow the tale to where the outer spheres  
Shiver with cold. Bright Merope is here!  
And thou, Orion, from thy gleaming belt  
Pluck the bright gems whose flashes dazzle us,  
And hold them for my darling. She shall sit  
Splendid among bright splendors; she shall be  
Crown'd by the stars to which men's eyes have  
turn'd

In wonder and in yearning since they loved.”  
And now Rhodanthe cried to him again:  
“O Cos, dear Cos, I pray thee let me go.  
The first, faint sunshine means but woe to me;  
For long ere this the nymphs were all astir  
About Diana. She will call for me,  
And who shall answer? Oh! I see them now  
Like bees about a flower. O Cos, dear Cos,  
I still can mingle with them if thine eyes  
Will only gleam less fiercely, and thy heart  
Will pity poor Rhodanthe.” But the youth  
Glared at her body's whiteness. “At thy feet  
The asphodels of death, and o'er thy head  
The morning's gold, O Merope!” he cried.  
Then looking up to where the stars had gleam'd,  
But now was empty, he upraised his hands

## RHODANTHE

---

And cried again: "Await us, ye whose eyes  
Behold enormous Night's magnificence,  
The dream-drugg'd earth, the black, mysterious  
sea,

Of dawn expectant. Loose your trumpeters,  
The burly Winds, and bid them shout through  
space

That with the sun's down-going there shall  
gleam

So bright a thing that gods, with wond'ring  
eyes,

Shall clamor on Olympus. Bid the moon  
Prepare to grow in glory, like the flower  
Love's kiss has made voluptuous, lest her light  
Be dimm'd by that of new-found Merope  
Whom I restore to heaven." Then to the  
nymph

Who, while he raved, had stood with clasped  
hands

And listen'd fearfully, the shepherd turn'd,  
Advancing slowly. And, with backward steps  
Retreating ever, from his grasp she shrank  
Until she sensed a menace at her heel,  
And, looking back, scream'd once, and then to  
earth

Fell, as though lifeless as the bird she held.  
For far below she saw the treacherous sea,  
Its constant motion undiscernible

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

From her chill height, a foot of pleasant soil  
Between her footsteps and the dread abyss  
Unscaled of aught save sea-gulls. Even now  
She heard the rhythmic beating of their wings,  
Their shrilly-piping young, and far below  
The dull, hoarse murmur of the rock-spent  
waves

Like ghostly thunder, low but terrible.  
And now Cos stood above her. "Hear," he  
cried,

"Aurora's song of morning. O'er his lute  
Apollo bends dejected when she plays,  
And rosy Zephyrs wander down the skies  
And cry her coming. In her chariot  
She comes from out the crimson of the East  
To wake the world. Arise, O Merope,  
And greet Aurora lest she turn from thee  
When thou art seated by Alcyone,  
Beneath whose eyes she passes." To her feet  
Then raised he tenderly the trembling girl,  
But kept his arm about her. "Let me go,  
O gentle Cos," she pleaded. "I will pray  
By day and night the gods to cherish thee,  
To lighten thine affliction, and at last  
Pour from their vials such peace upon thy heart  
That thou shalt bless Rhodanthe." And again  
Her eyes beheld the still and frightful sea,  
The sheer descent, and then the wild, wan face

## RHODANTHE

---

Of him beside her, turn'd expectantly  
Upon the sky above them. From his mouth  
No sound now issued, but in dumb commune  
With things unseen his lips would sometimes  
move

And then be fix'd; and then would move again  
And stay half-parted. In her ears the boom  
Of broken waves still sounded, and the whir  
Of unseen wings and thin, unlovely cries—  
Suggesting ghosts and Acheron's bleak shores.  
And then he seem'd her presence to forget  
And held her hand but lightly, gazing still  
On dawn's illusive, short-lived mystery  
With lenient eyes. But while Rhodanthe  
schemed

How best to coax him let her go her way  
And brave Diana's anger, questioning  
If sudden flight would help her, in his eyes  
The flames leap'd up. Then clasping her white  
form

He stumbled seaward; and while yet she saw  
The woods, Diana, Chromis, and the joy  
Of her few years go by as in a flash,  
The air received them—and her dream was  
done.

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

AND all that morn beside his humble hut  
Sat Chromis, dreaming. "She shall come  
with me

This very night," he murmur'd. "In the dusk,  
When the hush'd woods compose themselves to  
sleep,

And inky bats patrol the shadow'd aisles  
With noiseless wings, my love shall come with  
me

And share the golden welcome of the sands.  
And should she whisper of the vengeful nymphs  
Or pitiless Diana, on her mouth

My lips shall press forgetfulness, my hand  
Shall gently stroke the trouble from her brows,  
My love shall comfort her." And then he gazed  
Upon the endless waters, swinging now  
With mighty movement outward, scintillant  
And joyous-hearted. On the foam-capp'd  
waves

The gulls rode lightly, piping drearily  
Their harsh lament, well knowing that the deep  
Is ever treacherous and never kind.

But Chromis laugh'd. "Thy hands are white,"  
he cried,

"O happy Sea! The gods are fond of thee  
When thus thou raisest them to where they sit  
And curve their lips above thy joyousness.  
Beneath thy breast the ocean beauties lie

## RHODANTHE

---

On weedy couches rooted in the sands  
Or coral clusters; in the eyes of them  
Strange mem'ries linger, and their arms allure  
Imperill'd sailors to a death so sweet  
It leaves them smiling. But more fair than they  
Is she whose ivory shoulder bears the bow  
Of slender Dian; for her eyes are soft  
With hope and longing. When I gaze in them  
I seem no more a simple fisherman,  
But one whose gifts are boundless, heir to stars.  
O happy Sea! when thou behold'st my love,  
My white Rhodanthe, thou shalt sing of her  
Such splendid hymns that stars shall envy thee;  
And we will praise thee while the dawn grows  
red

And when the holy stillness of the dusk  
Hints to our hearts our own evanishing."  
Then laughing softly as one laughs who dreams,  
He rose and soon was busied with his nets,  
Here knotting and there mending; noting well  
If all the floats were perfect. While he work'd  
His eyes were ever drawn to where the woods  
Lay greenly still along the milky cliffs;  
And once it seem'd faint echoes came to him  
Of long-blown horns, and then despairing cries,  
Suggesting death. And when the sounds had  
ceased,

And once again the murmur of the sea



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Told Chromis of his duty, he was glad  
And bent above his slowly-drying nets,  
And laugh'd again. For man has ever been  
The victim of illusion. In the air  
He sees bright visions, and his heart is fed  
On hopes that are less tangible than mist.  
The sea is wiser in its hopelessness;  
The woods, in resignation; man alone—  
A bubble blown from out the lips of Life  
For bitter Death to shatter—man alone  
Expects the meagre mercy of To-day,  
The favor of To-morrow. But of this  
What reck's a tann'd and love-sick fisherman  
When greybeards are no wiser? O'er his nets  
He bent and sang, such songs as ye may hear  
If wand'ring by the melancholy sea  
On fragrant nights ye listen, songs that tell  
Of mermen's wooings and the vain pursuit  
Of wave-borne beauty, pale beneath its green.  
And then he sang an olden lullabye,  
A simple thing of cradles and of stars  
And mothers' arms, and of a drooping head  
Whose lids were poppy-weighted. Thus the  
Hours

Crept by unnoticed till the blessèd Eve,  
The regal Night's fore-runner, breathed on him  
And still'd his song. For suddenly the dusk  
Fell all around him, soft, compassionate,



## RHODANTHE

---

Sollicitous and loving. And he rose  
And sought his hut, where early he had strewn  
Soft rushes, newly gather'd; on his couch  
He threw strange skins, long treasured, silken  
stuffs

Cast on his back by bearded sailor men  
Who loved his beauty; at the door he placed  
A lighted lamp—and all to welcome her,  
To welcome his Rhodanthe. And the while  
He bound his leather sandals to his feet,  
And dream'd of her who soon would enter there,  
The Evening drew pale mists across the sea  
As if in pity. For the waves now bore  
To where the tender sands awaited her  
His heart's desire; and soon would lay her there  
For him to find; for him to weep above  
And dream of till his days had conquer'd him,  
And gentle whispers from the patient earth  
Bade him come home and ever be at rest.



**SAPPHO AND PHAON**





## SAPPHO AND PHAON

**W**HEN Time was young and life so beautiful

That, bending earthward from their airy heights,

The scornful stars portentously look'd down

On happy men, there lived a poetess

In Mitylene, on the sea-swirl'd isle

Of fortune-favor'd Lesbos. Sister she

To those same breezes that to-day may stir

The shiv'ring olives, or the lusher leaves

Of purpling grapes on hills where Pan once piped

Forgotten airs in ears long turn'd to dust.

There lies before me such a thumb-worn coin

As men have treasured for its loveliness,

From which I learn how fair a thing she was,

Brow, nose and chin pure Greek, with heavy lids

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

To veil her eyes' chaste passion. On her head  
The close-coil'd hair revealing modestly  
A tiny ear, and an exquisite throat  
Leading to greater beauties. This was she  
Whose faint few notes withstand the centuries,  
While volumes are forgotten. Though no more  
We speak of emperors or dynasties,  
Or India's gorgeous-jewell'd pageantry,  
The fame of Sappho trembles like a star  
Above life's doom'd illusions and the noise  
That ever ends in silence. Dust is now  
The hand that moulded for our eyes to see,  
And wonder at, her beauty; dust is she,  
And all her passion but a memory  
Along with first-won kisses. But to those  
Whose lips have sigh'd a promise, and whose  
          hearts

The fonder grow for life's impermanence,  
She is not dead. On nights of amethyst  
When eyes and souls dream starward, near to  
          them

She draws from out the Stygian silences,  
Old loves rememb'ring. Then the dreamers  
          hear

The songs she sang while from the joyous sea  
The wind came up and frolick'd in the wheat  
On golden mornings. Lesbian melodies  
Once piped by love-lorn shepherds, melodies

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Suggested by the laughter of a god  
A nymph at twilight wooing—these she sings  
To them that listen; and the voice of her  
Is sad, as is the rustle of the leaves;  
Is soft, as summer's comfortable rain.

**B**ENEATH the vine-hung porches of her  
home,  
Upon a couch be-spread with leopard skins  
Lay Sappho, musing, list'ning to the sea  
Whose lazy murmur pleased her. It was dawn,  
And not a wind yet ventured forth to wreak  
Its will upon the waters, strangely still,  
A sling's cast from her gardens. Over-head  
It seem'd one saw the bosom of a dove,  
Serenely grey; and yet a rosiness  
Encroach'd upon its softness, heralding  
The glad-eyed Day. And as when music nears  
Through half-hush'd woods to dreams still dedi-  
cate,  
This rosiness grew brighter, till at last  
A shouting glory seem'd to fill the void  
'Twixt earth and sky, and then the constant  
sun  
Came to his own, supreme. Now Sappho rose,  
And lifting slowly to the arch'd serene  
White, wondrous arms, wherein no lover's head  
Had yet found shelter for its weariness,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Thus hymn'd the morn's full-blown magnificence:

"Day, Day, bright Day! I would I were like thee,

For thou art everlasting. Thou dost see  
Each impulse of the ever-patient world  
And all its aspiration. In a glow  
Thou passest through the mystery of dawn  
To where new birth awaits thee. Old thou art,  
Yet ever young; and thee the grey Night sees,  
And loves thee for thy scorning. Heeding not  
The dewy sorrow of her haunting gaze  
Thou passest on with glories in thy train  
That seek to win and hold thee; only She,  
The troubled Night, adores thee and—abides."  
Array'd in white she stood there, white without  
And white within, as though the sea's own foam,  
Incarnate, pulsed in mortal loveliness  
To tell the sad, strange message of the sea.  
For Nature uses oft such instruments  
For her interpretation, lest the songs  
Of winds and waters be forever lost  
Amid our harsher singing. From the soil  
Ascend soft murmurs, tales of days bygone  
And loves long hopeless. These the poet hears  
And tells again at sundown; from the stars  
Descend the faint, illusive melodies  
He sings at dawnburst when the hills are wet



## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

And consecration's light illumines the sky.  
And though still young, too well fond Sappho  
knew

Whence came those earth-sweet murmurs, from  
what lips

Once curved and crimson. Well, too well she  
knew

How short a while we linger in the light  
That soon becomes a mem'ry; well she knew  
That all goes down, with laughter or with tears  
To mingle with blown roses; well she knew  
That e'en the stars, despite their choruses  
And solemn chants and gleaming bravery,  
Must sometime pale, be silent, and anon  
Must disappear as though they had not been.

AND while peace trembled over her, as light  
May tremble o'er the flower so delicate  
That dusk alone may woo it fearlessly,  
She lean'd from out the vine's embroidery,  
And sigh'd, and then was silent. In her heart  
Strange fancies nestled, dreams as yet half-  
form'd,

First longings and desires yet unexpress'd,  
Except when from her soul the Muses drew  
The first sweet strains of wing'd and poignant  
song.

For erst when one has suffer'd, loved and lost,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Beheld all glory dimm'd, and those bright wings  
Whereon all starry splendors lie enthroned  
Beat darkly in the ebon solitudes;  
When dreams prove vain and hopes ridiculous,  
And in our ears the laughter of the gods  
Booms like portentous thunder, then perhaps  
That cry may come at which the multitude  
Shall gape and shout: "The Singer!" But as  
yet

Her loves were mostly dream-loves. In her ears  
Old men, half-dead and wholly splendor-blind,  
Had shrill'd their palsied passion, tending her  
Their hoarded treasures for her loveliness,  
Their rubies for her laughter; at her side  
Pale youths had stray'd when purple hyacinths  
Breathed on the air a scent so odorous  
That madness seized them, and in stammer'd  
speech

They told their love; and others, graver-eyed,  
But still desirous of a maid so fair,  
Had sought to win her. But on each and all—  
On men of purpose, as on wild-hair'd boys  
And trembling dotards—Sappho turn'd an eye  
Of equal favor, blue and passionless  
As April's sky. Alcæus, it is true,  
Was ever with her. But she loved him not,  
Or only loved his song; while he, 't was said,  
To-day loved her, to-morrow Cyane,

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Or Polyphonta of the hopeless smile  
And large, unhappy eyes. For love comes  
easily

To one to whom all maids are beautiful  
And worth at least the effort of a song.  
And so while Sappho listen'd to his vows,  
Or shook her head when dusk and fragrances  
Upon the poet work'd their witchery  
And roused the older longings of the man,  
Her thoughts were elsewhere, e'en as now they  
were

With that which still was wanting. And again  
She sigh'd—whose loves, with Helen's, were to be  
Eternity's one wonder—and again  
The vine-leaves trembled while she cried through  
them:

“The silence lays its charm upon my soul;  
And things of shadow, things impermanent,  
Are shadow things no longer. In the skies  
Mysterious processions form and greet,  
O Day, thy bright enthronement; and the air  
Is quick as with the movements of the gods,  
Imperious and splendid. Change nor Time  
Can lay on them an unremitted toll,  
Nor make them mock the flaming face of Hope  
Or follow in the footsteps of Despair.  
They suffer not who burn not with desire;  
Who wing beneath the azure vault of heaven

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Their flight superb. 'T is we, star-enviers,  
Dreamers of dreams no god may understand,  
Whose little lives in their unhappy loves  
Fly like a wind-borne fragrance, that decline  
By ways of wreck'd ambition, steady griefs,  
Into the night that gave us to the day.  
I would I were not Sappho!" And her eyes  
Search'd the blue heaven's eterne serenity  
In wistful question. But no answer came,  
As none e'er comes from skies and from the sea  
Or aught that notes the wistfulness of man  
Since first he wonder'd. And the while she  
gazed,  
Her favor'd slave had enter'd, in whose eyes  
The dusk of Egypt brooded; one who was  
As young as Sappho and as delicate,  
Although her skin was tawny as the sands,  
And Egypt's huge, unfathom'd mystery  
Had made her joyless. On the silky rugs  
Her arch'd foot stepp'd so lightly that no sound  
Told Sappho of her presence; and the slave  
Was close beside her ere she slowly turn'd,  
With yet that look of question in her eyes,  
That mouth of sorrow. And the slave was wise  
Beyond her years. "O Sappho, thou art pale,"  
She said, and laid cool fingers to her cheek;  
"The sunshine riots in thy golden hair  
And bids thee hymn Apollo. But thy lips

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Are those of one who nevermore may sing  
Save Autumn's dirges, or of hopeless winds  
That roam wide wastes of melancholy sea.  
Why art thou pale, O Sappho?" Then on her  
The poetess smiled wanly. "Pale am I  
Because all beauty pales before a sky  
Of dawn enamor'd. Naught can rival it  
Save the sweet flower that modestly looks up,  
Unconscious of the dewy crown it wears,  
To ask a blessing and delight the gods  
With the mere sight of its tranquillity.  
And yet I seem so very old to-day."  
(Here sigh'd she and look'd seaward, sighing  
still.)

"It cannot be I wrote but yester-eve,"  
She mused at last, "a few short hours ago,  
That happy line about the nightingale—  
I seem more fit for tragedy than song."  
And then she held against her fever'd cheek  
The vine's cool leaves, and drew her pretty slave  
So close her lips might almost touch her ear.  
"I dream'd, dear Nepthys, that my brows were  
bound

With asphodel," she whisper'd. "In my hand  
I clasp'd a lily, white—Ah! white as death.  
The meaning tell me. I am grey at heart.  
The dawn is wearisome; the very sea,  
Clapping its hands to make me laugh with it,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Can comfort me no more." "Who dreams of  
asphodels

Shall love," the slave said. "Lilies hint of  
tears.

So say those wise in dreams. Ismèniás,  
Who reads the stars, may tell thee more than I,  
Who fear that one great passion shall be thine  
And thou shalt rue it till thy soul be weigh'd  
Against the feather. Have I anger'd thee?  
Thus mock us with their gifts the bitter gods,  
Both thine and mine. A woman learns it soon."  
But Sappho only turn'd to where the sea  
Glinted and gleam'd, as though their silv'ry  
spears

Ten thousand Tritons brandish'd from beneath  
And pierced the flood. "Whom I shall love,"  
she said,

"I'll hold to me forever. Love like mine  
Is such a gorgeous jewel it shall dart  
In coruscating splendor, ray by ray,  
Into the very soul of him I love.  
There shall not be one darksome spot in him;  
But, lit by my true passion, he shall be  
The faithful lantern in my firmament,  
All mine, forever, as yon constant sun  
Burns with the gods' hot fire and worships  
them."

"So have we dream'd since men first woke in us

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

The fateful passion," Nephthys cried to her.  
"We are the sands; our lovers are the winds  
That lift us from our deserts of despair  
And swirl us starward; then they fly from

us,

As flies the wind, and in despair again  
As falls the hopeless sand we fall to earth  
And evermore mourn man's inconstancy."  
So spoke she, slowly, as a child might say  
A well-learn'd song. "O Nephthys, hast thou  
loved?"

Cried Sappho, turning from the wind-stirr'd  
vines,

Her hands upon her bosom. "Sad thy voice  
As tender Memory's who leans to hear  
The low flute's dirges, and above the soil  
Breathes her lament for perish'd loveliness."  
"My mother loved," the little slave replied;  
"And when I drew the first sweet milk of her  
I learn'd the sorrow that, or soon or late,  
Each woman learns. No wonder we are sad.  
But come," she cried. "A thousand violets  
With yellow roseleaves mix'd till odorous  
The water seems, await thee in thy bath.  
And while thou bathest I will sing to thee  
A love song of the desert, sweetly strange  
Because most happy. It shall hearten thee  
To meet thy fate, O Sappho. Asphodels



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And white-cheek'd lilies! Oh!" And then she  
laugh'd,  
And led her silent mistress from the porch.



HAT noon she call'd the little slave to  
her,  
"I still am weary of myself," she said.  
"My tablets lie untouch'd. I cannot write.  
There surely is some splendor in the heavens  
For me to sing of; has the world grown dark  
That in it now no beauty I behold,  
Nor find an inspiration? In ourselves  
The trouble lies, for all is beautiful  
Could we but see it. All is marvellous  
From sun to flower, and a perfection crowns  
Each thing about us. I am growing old.  
I wrote my last poor verses yesterday."  
But Nepthys mock'd her. "'T was a week ago  
The Muse forsook thee, and thy work was done.  
So sure thou wert thou threwest in the sea,  
O moody one, thy Venus-praising hymn.  
Yet Mitylene now is marvelling  
About thy verses to the nightingale—  
I would I could repeat them." While she spoke,  
Half-wistfully and slowly, on her couch  
The restless Sappho, toying with a chain



## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Of gleaming, brown-gold topaz, now reclined  
And now was seated. "Nevermore," she  
sigh'd,

"Shall I betray the Muse's confidence,  
Or clothe in leaden words the fancies light  
I sometimes hear in dreams. Let others sing;  
My heart is over-heavy." And the slave  
Laugh'd as one laughs who hears a child com-  
plain

About a fancied grief. "Thou needest rest.  
The sight of blood, methinks would do thee  
good.

Oh! there's relief in combat." (Sappho raised  
Her perfumed hands in protest) "When the  
mind

Is sick or weary, let the lions slay  
A mewling slave. 'T is splendid medicine  
For sickly hearts." But Sappho silenced her,  
Although the slave still laugh'd. "There  
comes," she said,

The while she fann'd her mistress with a leaf,  
"Of late a new admirer to thy door;  
He says he knows thy wonder-songs by heart,  
And fain would see thee. Thou enslavest all  
By songs of love and hopeless nightingales."  
Then Sappho question'd idly: "To my door  
He comes, thou sayest?" "Yes," the slave re-  
plied.

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

“Three times he came, and three times went  
away

Because I mock'd him. When he said thy name  
I almost pitied him and let him in

To gaze a while upon thee from afar.

For never yet has one so said thy name,

O perfect Sappho; never could the wind

So breathe a hopeless passion as when he

Whisper'd his plea to see thee. ‘Go,’ I cried;

‘Thy naked shoulders would offend her eye;

Thy hands are rough with labor. At her feet

Kneel dream-fed poets; grey philosophers,

Whose flame of life is feeble, at her side

Long for their youth. But all are wearisome

To her whose eyes behold the beautiful

In lands of dream beyond the gaze of us

Who have our being here, and are no more.’”

“But Nepthys, Nepthys!” cried the Poetess,

Now upright sitting. “Tell me more of him.

It was not kind to send him from my door,

Him whom my song had lured there. Thou  
hast said

‘His naked shoulders,’ ‘Labor-harden’d  
hands,’

Was he a slave? The more should I be kind.

The poet should be rich in sympathy

And give, to them that need it, more than song;

Too oft our singing makes us passionless,

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Forgetful of our brothers that are mute."  
But now the maid was busied with a bowl  
Wherein bright fish with round, unwinking eyes  
Gaped at the world in lazy unconcern,  
Assured their food. "A free-man he; a  
Greek,"

She answer'd slowly. "He is fair enough  
To make a maid's heart heavy; but for thee,  
Thou hast too many that are noble born  
To sing thy praise to need a ferry-man,  
However fair and stalwart, in thy train."  
"A ferry-man?" cried Sappho. "One whose  
boat

Is often idle, while he sits and dreams  
Or mocks his busy fellows," Nephtys said.  
"His name is Phaon, or he said it was  
When I had told him you might come one eve  
And bid him use those splendid arms of his  
To pull us to and fro beneath the stars.  
A merry rogue I judged him by his eyes;  
And yet he sigh'd when 'To thy boat!' I cried:  
'Command a trireme ere thou knockest here.'"  
But Sappho now was musing. On the sea  
Her gaze still center'd. "'Phaon'! Such a  
name

Suggests a grief," she whisper'd to herself.  
"The breaking of light waves upon the sands  
Is Melancholy's music. Phaon is

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

A flame extinguish'd by the winds at night.  
Ah! what so sweet as 'Phaon,' or so sad?"  
And now she eyed that little slave of hers,  
Who stood before her like a thing of stone  
And ever wonder'd. "Shouldst thou love," she  
said,

"And lose the one thou lovest, say that name  
When the sad Night enswathes thee. More  
than sighs

It shall express thy sorrow. When the wind  
Wanders through gloomy caverns by the sea  
That name it moans, and moans it on the hills  
When skies are grey and all is desolate  
As the grey world beneath us. In my heart  
I know not what sad memory awakes  
When I say 'Phaon.' It is like the rain,  
Fond Nature's pity, but it soothes me not  
As is the soil soothed. 'Phaon!' Say it thou,  
My night-eyed Nepthys." But the slave was  
mute,

And shook her head. "He is the ferry-man,"  
She said at last. "The wantons laugh with  
him.

They lay cool fingers on his full-blown lips  
And deck his brows with garlands. In the  
night

When thou art gazing at thy sister stars,  
Dreaming the love that is most beautiful

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Because a dream-love only, Phaon sits  
With Cyprian Chloris in a cottage shunn'd  
By all whom thou wouldst welcome—such a  
house

As none dares enter in the glare of day.

'T is call'd the House of Jasmines. When I  
pass

I turn my head; but ever me pursues  
The fragrance of the jasmine. It is said  
He thanks white Venus for his comeliness.

Performing her a service, as reward  
She made him the most beautiful of men—

I wonder thou, who knowest everything,  
Hast not heard this." "It is an idle tale  
Spun by an idler poet in his cups,"

Said Sappho slowly. "Yet if he should come  
Once more, good Nepthys, as thou lovest me  
Be good to him. Who knows but words of  
mine

May offset Chloris' arts; may tell to him  
The white foam's message? Wind-blown, pas-  
sionless,

Child of the ever passion-tortured sea  
And Titan turmoil, pure it ever is;  
So pure it is, dear Nepthys. In the night  
It makes me think of pale Eurydice  
Moving so silently, so hopelessly  
Beside the Styx's waters; but at dawn,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

When through the air bright gods flash scorn-  
fully,

The foam reminds me of true poetry—  
Lost ere we grasp it. I must sing thereof.  
My tablets, Nephthys. Hasten! Bring them  
here."

Then mused the slave. "I thought—" But  
ere she spoke

Her thought of Sappho's inconsistency,  
The knock was heard upon the outer door  
And, eager-eyed, she sped—to let him in.

**A**ND soon he stood before her, bronzed,  
erect,

And conscious only of the one he saw,  
His equal in sheer beauty. Well she knew—  
And who in Mitylene knew it not?—  
The tale that link'd the fellow with the one  
Whose wanton loveliness made moths of men;  
Whose eyes were lodestones till she cast them  
off

And fed new lovers to her passion's flame.  
And while she lay at ease upon her couch,  
And watch'd him idly, yet expectantly,  
She wish'd she knew the tale those lips could  
tell;

And, wishing, was half-conquer'd. So she  
spoke,

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

And sweet that low voice sounded in his ears  
Who kneel'd to hear it. "Who art thou?"  
she ask'd;

"And what has drawn thee from the singing sea  
To my abode? Here I abide with dreams  
And half-heard voices. Though I sleep or wake  
I hear soft whispers, see pale presences  
Of other eyes unseen. For thee it is  
No place to kneel in; thou no poet art,  
No sick philosopher who aims to mend  
The sorry world he lives in. In thy hair  
The sun has nestled, and thy lips are those  
Of one who loves this life, but sings it not,  
Nor argues much about it. Who art thou?"  
And he, still kneeling, lower'd now his eyes  
To where stray petals strewn upon the floor  
Hinted the wind's wild passion. "I am he,"  
He said at last, "of whom but ill report  
Has reach'd to ears so delicate as thine.  
Phaon am I, the boatman. When I stood  
Without thy gate, thy slave upbraided me  
With 'Sappho is not Chloris. Get thee gone  
Where she awaits thee. Sappho and the stars  
Tremble in heights where thou canst never be.'  
And yet—O thou, who art love's poetess,  
Whose wild, sweet song is love's interpreter,  
Is passion's music, thou wilt pity me  
Who, like a leprous beggar, come to thee,



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Lured by the hymns that other lips than mine  
Read in the market-place while, open-mouth'd,  
We mute ones listen, deeming thee divine."  
And Sappho smiled. "Thou pleadest well,"  
she said.

"But thou and I are of the self-same clay  
That perishes so soon. The boatman thou,  
And I the singer; both by tolerance  
Are here at all. Upon the rocking sea  
Thou dreamest daily—by thine eyes I know  
Thou art a dreamer. I, beneath these vines,  
Sit with closed lids and think I am at sea  
Or where the gods are gather'd. But the night  
May take me hence, O Phaon, to the dusk,  
Where they that wear mortality's fair garb  
Forever brood in silence o'er the past."  
But Phaon's face now flamed above her own.  
"Yet still art thou divine, O Sapphire-eyed!"  
His lips protested. "Thou as deathless art  
As are all things of beauty. Music, flower,  
The sea's imperious splendor, high-hung  
cloud—

These change, but die not. Thou art part of  
them,

And so shalt live forever. In the air  
Each echo of thy far-resounding song  
Shall ever quiver, as the lark's brave note  
Forever quivers. Death may beckon thee;



## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

But still shall linger in the hearts of men  
Thy memory, O Sappho!" While he spoke  
Her eyes grew tender as the sky itself,  
And in its sanctuary, vaguely stirr'd,  
Her young heart flutter'd. Yet her gaze was  
fix'd

Upon a snowy, slightly-swaying sail,  
That gleam'd an instant, and then dropp'd from  
sight

Where the flat sea seem'd suddenly to end.  
And though she was not quite aware of it,  
Gazing beyond the thing she seem'd to see,  
How oft in greyer years that snowy sail  
Remember'd was—that golden afternoon.  
How oft it seem'd, when the bright day was  
done

And Memory stole forth with the chaste moon,  
Itself a pale regret—how oft it seem'd  
She heard that voice above her, passionate  
And yet so sad. How oft to where the stars  
Peep'd through the purple canopies of heaven  
And hymn'd the Night, she raised her unkiss'd  
eyes

And whisper'd: "Phaon!" Ah! the winds  
could tell—

The viewless winds, so heavy with our griefs—  
Would they but answer. But they tell us not  
Of things so bitter as untimely death,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

So sad as misplaced love. They wander on,  
With sorrow swollen, over sea and land,  
And sigh forever and forever sigh,  
Feeding on man's eterne unhappiness.

**T**HEN, seeing he was silent, Sappho spoke;  
And low her voice was, as the dove's voice is  
In half-hush'd woods at twilight. "Thou art  
one

Of whom, indeed, men tell unhappy things  
Beyond my understanding. Sings the sea  
No stern reproof of that—thy wickedness?  
And do the stars, night's blessed comforters,  
Utter no protest when thou shamest them?  
Day loves thy manly beauty. Canst thou  
stand

Erect amid its sunshine uncondemn'd?  
The very beauty that encircles us  
Should keep us clean; for we are part of it—  
Of trees and flowers. Through not unkindly  
eyes

They note our aspirations, our conceits,  
Our struttings and our weakness. They behold  
Thy beauty, Phaon; they delight in mine,  
And mourn, as we mourn, broken loveliness,  
The lost ideal and barter'd purity."  
Then Phaon cried, now kneeling at her side,  
Yet looking down: "Lest in the treach'rous sea

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

I hurl my soil'd self, pity! What am I  
That thou shouldst waste thy starry thoughts  
on me,

So far beneath thee? Sappho! I have sinn'd  
As weak men sin. But once I gazed on thee—  
It was the morn our runners proved their skill  
O'er Phyxo of Methymna—and I ask'd  
What flower it was that thus in human form  
Made Mitylene famous. One replied:

'Her name is Sappho. From the palace steps  
She reads this noon her Hymn to Proserpine.  
Who, then, art thou, that knowest Sappho not?'  
But I was silent, for mine eyes on thee  
Rested as on bright loveliness itself.

And thee I follow'd with the murmur'ing crowd  
Until I saw thee halo'd by the great,  
The brave, the thoughtful and the beautiful,  
Thine eyes turn'd skyward. White thy garments were

And pale the face above them; but thy brows  
Were violet-clasp'd; and oh! thy golden hair  
That fell about thee as the sunshine falls  
About a thing of loveliness in stone!  
I heard thee speak. Thy words were passion-wing'd.

It seem'd I saw the hopeless Proserpine  
With swirling ghosts about her, grey and cold,  
Speechless and leaden-hearted. On her lips

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

An awful sorrow quiver'd; from her eyes  
Pale Death had blown the pity and the dream.  
And when at last thy face was turn'd to earth  
It seem'd that I still huddled in the hell  
Thy fancy painted; when at last I breathed  
The sweet, warm air again, I found thee gone,  
And gaping men around me. From that day,  
My past is bitter; for I dream of thee  
And long for thee, O Sappho! I whose hands  
Are set to oars, whose shoulders to the sun  
Are ever bared; whose bread is earn'd by toil—  
Take pity, Sappho!" In the wind-stirr'd  
vines

A bird had settled. With its head a-slant,  
It weigh'd what harm this man might wreak on  
it,

And feeling safe, commenced at last to sing,  
Oblivious to his presence. And the song  
Roused Sappho from her dreaming. "Art  
thou come

To tell me this?" she ask'd him. "It is praise  
Beyond mere laurels." But he answer'd not,  
Nor sought her eyes; but ever look'd away,  
Full conscious of his own unworthiness  
And fearful of her anger. And at last  
She rose and stood beside him where he kneel'd,  
And touch'd his hair. "I, too, have dream'd,"  
she said,

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

“Of other things than sunsets and the loves  
Of long-dead lovers. I have dream’d of one  
Whose hand might lead me down the ways of  
life;

Whose voice might comfort me; whose eyes  
might shine

With warmer sympathy than warms the stars  
That share night’s solemn silences with me.

I, too, have dream’d, O Phaon!” Then she  
cried

With sudden passion: “If thou lovest me,  
And lovest truly as thine eyes declare,  
Then win me, Phaon; win me! Where it will,  
Love bursts in blossom. We the puppets are  
Of them that watch us ever stonily,  
And deem us children, as we doubtless are.

So thou art worthy of a woman’s love  
A woman still would love thee, though in  
chains

The galleys held thee. Go thou to thy toil.

A singer I; but I am woman still;  
And though thou toilest, thou a dreamer art,  
And so a King. I’ll come to thee at eve,  
And we will look together on the stars  
Above the silent waters. Go thou now.

The little bird has left us, fearing me  
Who would not harm it, nor would harm the  
hair

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

I touch so gently. Leave me! Nephthys comes."



HE days sped by. Time is as pitiless  
To lovers as to dotards. One and all  
Hasten, with backward glances, to the  
shade

Deeper than that the tree casts; there to wait  
No first, faint flush of sombre-tinted skies;  
But unexpectant, in grey solitude,  
Hopeless as is pale heartlessness itself,  
To mourn the days that once were bright, were  
sweet,

As flashing swords and clashing cymbalry.  
But little heed gave Sappho to grey Time,  
And little heed gave Phaon. In his boat,  
When dusk had closed the flowers and hush'd the  
town,

They sat within the shelter of the sail,  
Forgetful of the inattentive slave  
Whose eyes stared seaward. Ever on and on  
The soft winds bore them; and perhaps he sang  
Songs long forgotten of forgotten things,  
Dead loves and hopeless passions. Overhead  
The stars that saw the tragedy of Troy  
Travell'd their ways in utter unconcern

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Of aught beneath them; and the sea was dark  
With thoughts of secret and forbidding  
things—

Of future tempests when the madden'd winds  
Might scream their hatred, and the bulging  
clouds

Like monstrous sheep, distracted, fill all space.  
But now those winds were gentle as the breath  
That sometimes warm'd him when she question'd  
him

To make him answer; for his voice to her  
(Although she knew it not) was now as dear  
As sunlight to the flower, as music is  
To him most dear who soon no more shall hear.  
Stories, half fact, half fancy, he had heard  
From men whose feet had wander'd from the  
tracks

Then known to few; strange tales and stranger  
myths

Of northern people whom the cold had chill'd  
And made ferocious; monsters, mighty-wing'd.  
Of these he told her, as she sat at ease  
And watch'd his face, until his mood would  
change

And he would paint the still'd sea's majesty  
E'er rosy dawn's bright hands may ruffle it.  
And ever crouch'd, all-silent, in the prow  
The little Nepthys, thinking of the sands



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Of that far home where softer stars beheld  
The crawling caravan, the solemn palm,  
And all the mute immensities in stone.

AND once it seem'd that he no more could  
speak,

Although she question'd; could but gaze at her,  
Grown mute in worship. In his boat they were.  
Across the sea light breezes landward bore  
The swirling sea-mists; but the setting sun,  
Its labors ended, made these travellers—  
These pure, sweet mists—as golden as itself;  
And while they slowly shimmer'd to the land,  
To bless the trees and ever-silent hills,  
And cool the purpling grapes on sun-parch'd  
vines,

They swathed the lovers in a golden sheen,  
And made the boat a thing of mystery,  
A place for dreams to home in. And the dream  
That sometimes comes to women came to her  
Who lay amid that ghostly wonderment  
Above that sapphire sea. The spoken word  
Was still unutter'd. But his eyes proclaim'd  
What language could not, what no words might  
dare

Amid such glory; and as lower dropp'd  
The gleaming ball that solaces the world  
She lean'd to him, yet trembled; questioning



## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Within herself the while she read his eyes,  
If joy like hers, brought forth in golden haze,  
Could last forever, or must sometime turn,  
Like mists at night, to utter joylessness.  
But when he spoke, her doubts were all dispell'd,  
And it seem'd dawn again. "Dear love!" he  
cried,

"Pure as the sea-mist is my love of thee,  
And thine is golden as its memory.  
Bright Venus be my witness! Thou art she  
Whose song has won me from black infamies.  
Thou knowest all. But if thou pitiest  
One who because of his unworthiness  
Now loves thee more; and if thou, too, canst  
love

One who is but the toy of Destiny,  
Its easy tool, lay once thy sea-sweet hand  
Upon my brow." Then from her place she  
lean'd—

All white and golden in the golden mists—  
To where his face, like an impassion'd star,  
Paled wistfully against her. In his hair  
Her fingers shelter'd, and the voice of her  
Reach'd to his soul as though a wind it were,  
Breathed for his spirit's solace and his peace.  
"My love thou art, else were I far from thee;  
And I am thine, or the bright-misted sea  
Had never heard us whisper." While she spoke

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

She press'd his fair face upward, reading it  
With anxious eyes. "Ah! never have I loved,"  
She sigh'd at last, "nor know if this be love  
That seems half pain. And yet when thou art  
near

Life's troubles fade, as now the near land fades  
Behind the sweet compassion of the mist;  
And jagged rocks that frown o'er treach'rous  
sands

Are hidden lest their menace frighten us.  
Thou hast not liken'd me to things that pass,  
Pale flowers, doom'd stars, inconsequential  
things

That have not voice nor feeling. In his songs  
Alcæus ever likens me to these,  
And makes his love a moan; in every rose  
He sees me with'ring, and the winds intone  
The death-song of poor Sappho." But her  
hand

Was fast in Phaon's now—the little boat  
Quite moveless on the waters. "Nay!" he  
cried,

"I am no singer. On the sea I live.  
I scorn both stars and roses; and the winds,  
However hard they blow, dismay me not.  
A flower is but a pretty thing to toss  
At—" Phaon stopp'd, rememb'ring her whose  
eyes

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Still gleam'd behind the jasmines—"at thy feet,"

He said at last, "where I would ever lie  
Heedless of fate, while thou shouldst weave for me

Thy splendid dreams. Enswathed in Day's bright haze

Or Night's imperial purple, we must wend  
Our way to death. I love thee! All around  
The mists are swirling; thus in hell they swirl  
Who once were joyous, but forever now  
Bemoan life's misspent moments. Thee I love.  
Say once thou lovest me." And while the mists  
Hid them from Nepthys and what gods might stare

Unjoyously above them, to his lips  
Her own were nearing. All that threaten'd her—

Grey gods and greyer future; even she,  
The heavy-lidded woman of the night  
Who sat behind the jasmines—was forgot  
In that one moment. And with eyes half-closed  
She murmur'd: "Phaon!" So the winds might sigh

On drowsy nights when the bewilder'd stars  
Grieve for earth's lovers; so might sigh the sea  
When Sorrow draws her sable cerements  
About her mouth's compassion. Then his lips

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

To hers descended; and while Nephthys dream'd  
Of æon-weighted Egypt, and the dust  
That mock'd the splendid hopes of petty men,  
The lovers vow'd their love's immunity  
From change or death. Then Silence sat with  
them

The while again, and ever yet again  
Each read the other's eyes; or gently touch'd  
Hair black or golden and all-wonderful,  
Because belov'd. And Sappho question'd him  
Why he, then deem'd most perfect of all men,  
Should find in her perfection; but his words  
Were vague, as words are ever when we seek  
To tell what beauty is, or seems to us.  
"I love," he said. "I cannot tell thee why.  
The gods have stroked thy tresses with their  
hands,

And left them brighter than the rays that dart  
From sun-fed, straight Apollo; o'er thy head  
Blue skies have linger'd till their loveliness  
Lies lightly on thine eyes. No poet I.  
I cannot thread my wonder-haunted words  
To weave about thee. He whose trade it is  
To sing of stars, of lovers' tragedies  
And fairest things, can number thee with them,  
And sing thy praises. Look thou in mine eyes  
The while I tell thee in ill-chosen speech  
How well I love thee. Thou art beautiful.

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Thy throat, thy hands, thy feet are wonderful;  
Thy voice contains the pity of the hills,  
The sea's deep sorrow and its joyousness.  
Thou speakest, and the treachery of Time  
Forgotten is. O Sappho! speak to me."

But still the girl was dreaming. All around  
The sea rock'd idly, while the golden mists  
Fell lightly here, and there as lightly rose  
And moved away; for now from out the south  
A breeze was puffing faintly, and ere long  
Would lift the ghostly burden from the waves,  
And let the gods behold these innocents,  
Who loved despite the lasting enmity  
'Twixt god and man; who dream'd and fear'd  
    them not,

Nor even thought about them. And at last  
She spoke, whose eyes had long been fix'd on his,  
Whose love he had awaken'd. "Love!" she  
    said,

And low her voice was as the voice of one  
Who knows that love is life's sweet mystery,  
And death its sallow foeman; "though my  
    songs

Like dipping swallows leave me, and the speech  
That slowly comes to thee to me is swift  
As color'd wings upon the air of noon,  
Yet must I stammer if I seek to tell  
The love I bear thee. I can say 'I love;'

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Can call thee by thy fragrance-laden name,  
And watch thy lashes' shadow on thy cheek.  
But how I love no words can ever tell.  
Above the rose the bee dreams heavily;  
Above the sands, winds tremble; and the night  
Presses the earth's cool beauty. Who can sing  
Of silent passion? Phaon, thee I love.  
To tell thee more my girl's heart knows not how,  
Nor seeks to learn. Ah! hold me close to thee  
And ask no questions. Love that silent is  
Lasts ever longer than the love that's told.  
I kiss thy lashes." "I, the mouth of thee,"  
Her lover answer'd; "with thy dreams be mine  
For ever mingled. When thou silent art  
I'll know thou lovest, and I'll kneel by thee  
Expecting naught save silence's caress,  
Dropp'd from thine eyes of azure wonderment."  
And now the breeze blew stronger, and the sail  
Fill'd to its full and slowly landward bore  
The happy-freighted bark. From where she  
sat  
The little slave, still singing to herself,  
Beheld white Mitylene, with its walls  
Sentry'd by whisp'ring lovers; with its wharves,  
Where ships, like weary pigeons, lay at rest;  
With gilded temples and white palaces,  
Unconscious of their doom. Already now  
The western skies were slowly crimsoning;

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

And the still mists, their mission being done,  
Crept from the sea and left it like a gem  
Of wondrous color, purple, emerald,  
Wine-red and partly golden. With the breeze  
Came faint, sweet odors, as of flowers that  
bloom

In distant gardens where pale Loveliness  
Bends graciously above them; and soft hymns  
Soothed the still air that erst was desolate.

And while they near'd the harbor, and the slave  
Cool'd her small hand while singing, Phaon  
lean'd

Once more to Sappho. "Thus our life shall be,  
O ever-now Divinest! Golden be

Thy coming years; and when Death summons  
thee

May I go with thee, that my love may light  
Thy footsteps in that melancholy home."

But Sappho now was sad as was the hour,  
And wish'd it all were yet to say again,  
And all to dream of. "Thee I trust," she said.  
"My love is thine; and though the silent mists  
Have left me frighten'd, and the gods make  
mock

Of human loves, say once thou lovest me.  
Say once thou lovest me; that when To-day  
Lies slain upon Time's monstrous catafalque,  
And Night beholds us with great tenderness



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And much compassion, I may dream of it,  
And bless it, Phaon, for its gift of thee."  
And Phaon trembled as he touch'd her cheek.  
"I love thee, Sweet," he whisper'd. And the  
while  
The boat crept homeward, still he cried to her:  
"I love thee, love thee!" And the light was  
gone  
When they were come to where, with lower'd  
sail,  
Their boat was beach'd upon the golden sands  
And Nepthys roused her mistress from her  
dreams.  
For still she heard him whisper, heard him cry:  
"I love thee, Sappho!" And throughout all  
time  
Those words shall tremble outward; for our  
vows  
Endure beyond the frailness of the lips  
That give them utt'rance, as in dreams we see  
The one most loved, though Fate's conspiracy  
Deprives us of her presence and her love.



## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

**A**ND when, behind the jasmines, in the  
house  
Where true love never enter'd, Chloris  
heard

Vague rumors of this wondrous love-affair,  
She laugh'd, while heaved her bosom. "When  
I will

I'll breathe his name upon the twilight air,  
And he shall hear and come to me," she said.  
"For when I sigh the moon grows passionate,  
And, scornful of the virgin sisterhood,  
Whose queen she is, looks longingly to earth  
And yearns for dead Endymion. Who is she,  
This untaught girl, this Sappho, to compete  
With me whom men have crown'd the Cyprian;  
Who let me scorn them while they burn for  
me

And hunger for my kisses?" And her slave  
Bent low before her, fearful lest the glance  
Behind that laughter kill her. "Sit," she said,  
Rare ointments in the hollow of her hands,  
"That I may bathe thine ivory-tinted feet  
With these crush'd petals of faint hyacinths  
And yellow roses. He shall come to thee  
If thou but callest, for thy voice would wake  
Diana's lover from his dreamless sleep.  
Thy foot is bruised, O Chloris!" But as yet

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Such things unheeded were of her whose  
thought

Was still of Phaon. In the chamber's floor  
An onyx bath was fashion'd. To its brim  
With water fill'd, this pool reflected her  
Who stood beside it, show'd exquisitely  
Her own perfection; show'd such raven hair  
As Night might envy, and a form so fair  
That Day outstretch'd his happy arms to her,  
All else forgetting. "I am beautiful,"  
She said at last. "The trembling nymph that  
bends

Above the stilly waters in a wood  
Of swaying cedars, is less white than I;  
Above my brows a mystery lies coil'd;  
And when I look, through half-closed eyes, at  
men,

They sicken till I love them. I have heard  
Much talk of Sappho and her gleaming hair;  
Her eyes that never smoulder; and her songs  
Of swallows and a love she never knew.

But I a woman am; I play on men.  
Empress am I of passion; and the wind  
Which sways the dust that breathed and found  
delight

In olden æons, is less masterful  
Than I who sway that dust while yet 't is  
quick."

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

And then she noted how the trembling slave  
Was busied with her sandals. "Go!" she said,  
"And seal the wicket, that no foot may tread  
My purple rugs till Phaon comes again,  
Of love expectant. From my sight conceal  
The golden sunlight; let me hear no song,  
And strew no roses on my leopard skins.  
He loves me. I have charm'd him to his  
soul;

So webb'd him in a net of witchery  
That Hercules would falter at the task  
Of freeing him. He loves me! That says all.  
I lured him from the wiles of Soprian  
Whose shoulders were more beautiful than mine;  
Yet she, despite the magic of her smile,  
Went to her death the day I beckon'd him.  
Let Sappho have the plaudits of the world,  
Fit praise for shallow rhymesters; women's  
lips

Mean more than gold or laurels. Phaon is  
Man as gods make them, simple, primitive,  
My one desire; and till the chilling mists  
Sober my passion and constrain my love,  
I ask for naught but Phaon of the gods.  
Behind the fragrance of my lattices  
I'll breathe his name until he comes to me  
To leave me never; then, his lips on mine,  
I'll fold him in the crimson of my love

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And—Go! The wicket!” But she stood  
alone  
Amid the jasmine fragrance and the gloom.

AND so it happen'd. For as dreams are  
born  
For Fate to shatter, so this first, sweet love  
That morning'd in the hush of Sappho's heart,  
A place still virginal, was doom'd as is  
The golden promise of impassion'd dawn.  
Thus it has been since with her sister orbs  
The earth was born to prove impermanence;  
And Death, far sterner than the gentler Sleep,  
Became Life's lord and Fate's grim arbiter.  
A little while on Phaon's heart reposed  
The head of Sappho, as on other hearts  
Fair heads have rested; but no lips have told  
A love as fond in words so delicate  
That now we mourn the utter loss of them.  
A little while the gods were merciful.  
And Mitylene wonder'd. For by day  
They walk'd together in the market-place,  
And men were silent when they saw the light  
Upon the lovers' faces; and at night  
Behind the vines upon her portico  
They sat and whisper'd, while the moonlight  
kiss'd  
The still'd sea's tragic face. Then no man saw

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Love's perfect flow'ring, or the mysteries  
Of that rare hour when, with averted eyes  
E'en Fate itself a little while is kind.  
The short night through, while Time watch'd  
warily

The order'd march of the resplendant stars,  
Well knowing what must follow, side by side  
They sat and whisper'd; and the dark about  
Thrill'd as with music. In the moonlight  
gleam'd

White Mitylene, but it seem'd to them  
A ghostly city, where their dreams might home  
But no man ever enter. Thus a while,  
A little while, dear Joy abode with them,  
And Sappho ask'd no more. In wonderment  
Days came and went, and left such memories,  
Such perfect petals of flower-like happenings,  
As, fadeless on the highways of the Past,  
Make dreamless Age less bitter. For at last,  
Unknown to Sappho, who of Phaon's love  
As sure was as a girl is ever sure,  
What had to be crept in upon the dream,  
The gods agreeing. Nature pays no heed,  
Nor deems such matters of grave consequence  
When Hybla's crest is daily to be bathed  
In golden fire; while her belovèd trees  
Are yet to nurture, and the holy grain  
Forth from the solemn fields is yet to win.

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

The hopeless passion of the gusty wind,  
Sea-tragedies and star-births, cataclysms  
In older constellations than our own—  
These Nature heeds; our births and bitter  
deaths,

And all the little loves that fly between,  
Are naught to her; ourselves but puppets are  
Whose clamor vexes, but is soon forgot.  
And so when Phaon, weary of a love  
So pure as Sappho's, touch'd her hair no more,  
(So fair the coin one cannot understand!)  
Or touch'd it coldly, or sat moodily  
The while she pour'd her soul out in a mist  
Of musical endearment, on their seats  
The gods sat stonily. Beneath the trees  
That graced the palace gardens still were seen  
The two I tell of; where the gods were praised,  
Or in the market places; and again  
All Mitylene wonder'd. For the light  
Show'd Phaon moody, but reveal'd the love  
Of their belovèd Sappho. Night by night  
He bore her seaward; but the waters heard  
No sighs or whisper'd love-words save her own.  
And when at last his spirit sensed the call  
Behind the jasmines, heard the cry of her  
Who laugh'd the while she call'd him, sure of  
him,

His heart leap'd up, as when, on tempests fed,

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

The awful flames from subterranean glooms  
Leap up and out and, flaring fearfully,  
Shock with red horror the repose of night.  
And even then, aware how base he was,  
He stopp'd his ears to that insidious call,  
And strove to let the beauty of the dusk  
Win him to chasteness. But a passion chill'd  
Bleak as the moon is, which terrific suns  
Warm not, nor waken; and his love was dead,  
And soon that wicket open'd to his touch.

SWIFT-WING'D is news that brings unhappiness.

That very day a crone, a broken thing  
Whom hate had aged and malice so deform'd  
That none could deem her woman, hobbled up  
And call'd for Sappho. She, with gold in  
hand,

Bade Nepthys lead her to the portico  
And bring her cakes and honey, fruit and milk,  
A staff to walk with; but the crone, when come,  
So froze her welling kindness with an eye  
Spared by the years, that Sappho shrank from  
her

As from a horror. When the tale was told,  
The crack'd lips mumbling over Phaon's fall  
As though it were a very pleasantry,  
She gave her gold and bade the bent thing go



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

But never more ask alms, or aught, of her.  
It was not yet high noon. Across the sky,  
Bluer than rain-wash'd turquoise, fleecy clouds  
Were slowly trailing, as when full-fed sheep  
Wander the meadows over; on the sea  
White, listless sails hung idly in the sun  
Above as listless boats and fishermen.  
A little while and teasing winds would drive  
Their fleecy flocks the heaven's wide meadows  
through;  
Would lift the waves, and fill those idle sails  
And make the boats leap onward. Soon would  
come  
The men to Mitylene, with their catch,  
And, showing finny beauties, would be told  
The news of Phaon. They would laugh,  
perhaps,  
And soon forget; or wonder what in him  
Fair Sappho saw to waste her love on him.  
But she, the blue-eyed, stood beside the vines  
And watch'd the crone go dwindling down the  
road,  
For speech too heavy-hearted. It was done,  
This first white hope; this first fair dream of  
hers,  
This golden expectation. To the gods  
She raised no hands in protest, made no cry,  
But ached in silence, as a woman will,



## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

While men uplift the anger of their arms  
And curse the gods. And now the dusty road  
Was rid of its bent burden; and the town  
Quiver'd beneath the noon-glare. By the vines  
The girl still stood when Nephtys came to her  
And touch'd her shoulder. To her cheek she  
laid

Brown fingers of compassion. "Dear," she  
said,

(How low the voice was of that little slave!)

"Dear Mistress, Sappho! In my Egypt's  
sands

Sleep many who have loved unhappily,  
Yet now know peace. Thou, too, shalt know at  
last

The sweet forgetfulness that makes the dead  
The envy of the living. All around  
Life's iridescent bubbles tempt our grasp,  
But shatter when we touch them. Ah! The  
dead

That sleep within my Egypt envy not  
The hunger of the living. He that dreams  
Escapes much care, much sorrow; far above  
The petty disappointments of to-day,  
To-morrow's fore-doom'd hopes, the dreamer  
treads

Heights where the dawn is never night-  
eclipsed."

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

The while she spoke her mistress look'd away  
To where the sails still gleam'd; but now she  
turn'd

And fix'd such eyes of question on the slave  
That Nephtys knew her thought, and answer'd  
her.

“A child I am,” she said, “but very wise.  
I ask my gods for nothing, save to sleep  
At last in Egypt where I first awoke.  
The soundless deserts taught me long ago  
That all illusion is except the dream.  
And thou who dreamest, in such solemn things  
As stars and starry chantings, in the flowers  
Whose exhalations are more sweet than sighs  
From lips that hint their own inconstancy,  
Must find thy loves. The earth is beautiful.  
Between the heedless sky and this sweet soil  
Is much to hold thy wonder. In the trees  
Is peace, is inspiration; in the cloud—  
That airy traveller to lands unknown—  
Enough to fill thy heart with restlessness,  
Thine eyes with longing. Ah! so wonderful  
The world about us. Love thou loveliness,  
And thou shalt yet be happy. Leave to them  
Whose hollow laughter shocks the universe  
And mocks the gods, the loves that flare and  
fall—

The loves of men. The thin-flank'd lioness

## SAPPHO AND PHAON

---

Is surer than is woman of her mate;  
For he is brother to the bodiless wind,  
Flies here, and there, and loves as winds may  
love—

Heedless of aught so they but have their will.”  
But Sappho answer’d not. Against the vines  
She lean’d her cheek and, gazing on the sea,  
Stood as one stands above a buried hope  
With eyes that see not. What the gods decree  
Must be despite our wishes. Through the  
years

Each bears his burden; only Death may cut  
The cord that binds us to our destiny  
Of joy or sorrow. But she knew it not  
Who gazed so sadly on the seas where now  
The glory mock’d her; knew not that in time  
The ache would pass, and other dreams would  
come

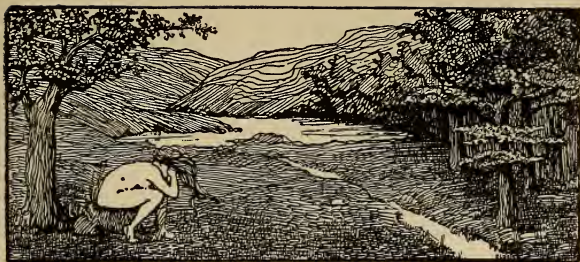
And end as dreams end. She was young; was  
true;

As all that’s young is true and beautiful  
And very holy. And the setting sun,  
When the frail boats were safely gather’d home  
And splendor look’d its last upon the sea,  
Still saw her standing there, all white and gold,  
Longing for night, and silence, and the stars.



ŒNONE





## ŒNONE

**T**HE woods were waking. In the steely  
light

Preceding dawn-flush, sympathetic trees  
Trembled a little when the morning wind,  
Itself just loosen'd from the Caves of Pearl,  
Touch'd the still leaves, intoning fitfully  
The advent of the splendor-follow'd Day.  
The birds still silent were, save when the dove  
Coo'd from a bough its thrice-repeated note  
Of constant sorrow, or in airy nests  
A hungry fledgling cheep'd its discontent.  
The keepers of eternal mysteries,  
The trees, had held their secrets through the  
night,

Brooding perhaps in green solemnity  
Above the ancient Mother, whence they rose  
And where at last they must return again

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

With all that made a noise beneath the stars,  
With all that loved, with all that walk'd alone.  
And now aware that from its monstrous urn  
Day's glory soon would over-flood the world,  
They waited with a grave expectancy  
The daily wonder; but their hearts were sad—  
As all is sad except unthinking men,  
As all is sad that truly understands.

**T**HERE lay beneath the gravest of these  
trees

Three graceful nymphs—the pale Ocyroë,  
Whose love-tale was the wonder of the woods;  
Lanassa, not yet old enough to love,  
And therefore happy, though she knew it not;  
And Thornax of the unpersuaded eyes  
And reedy laughter. At the feet of them  
Wild roses cluster'd, screening them from all  
That peer'd and pried at night-time; save when  
came

From out its own secluded hiding-place  
The amber-color'd moth, a-fluttering  
Along Night's ebon aisles, or from his bough  
Look'd down the still'd and wond'ring night-  
ingale.

And well it was the roses shelter'd them  
While Dian slumber'd, or had wander'd far  
To find Endymion; for the satyrs roam'd



## ŒNONE

---

Those woods at night, and centaurs; and the  
dark

Oft startled was by anguish-noted cries  
That drove the dread wolf, slinking, to his lair.  
And many a nymph, whose face in Dian's train  
Show'd fairer than a lily's, answer'd not  
When the pale Huntress call'd her by her name  
While yet the sun was rising, and the hounds  
Bay'd the day's welcome and dismay'd the deer;  
And many a nymph from that chaste sisterhood  
Was sternly banish'd, and for evermore  
Roam'd all alone the odor-breathing woods  
And was as one that is accounted dead.  
And now, just waken'd, on the sleeping twain  
Lanassa gazed. One arm beneath her head,  
Her bosom veil'd by silky loveliness  
Spun from the gods' own looms, her smiling lips  
Suggesting dreams as golden, Thornax lay  
Beside her graver sister. Black her hair  
As the soft eyes of the belovèd Night  
Whose child she was, and whose unhappiness  
Had long become her heavy heritage.  
What dreams, Lanassa wonder'd, now were  
theirs,  
The one so rosy and the one so pale,  
So gentle and so silent? While she gazed  
One laugh'd and murmur'd—Thornax; but the  
face

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Of her whose hair was dark, Ocyroë,  
Grew ever sadder, as if Day had breathed  
A message in the tiny ears of her,  
And shock'd the soothing witchery of sleep.  
Then droop'd Lanassa slowly over her,  
And kiss'd her lashes. "Wake, Ocyroë!"  
She whisper'd fondly, as the other stirr'd  
And open'd slowly eyes of weariness  
Against the eyes above her. "It is day!  
Like vestals when the sacrifice is done  
The morning mists have slowly pass'd away;  
The woods contain them till they disappear  
Like music's spirit in the cool, clean air.  
The grass is silver-gleaming; but I see  
As faint a blush upon the mountains' crest  
As tints the brow of Venus, when, surprised  
At dawn by Eros, she awakes from sleep  
And smiles beneath her kisses. It is day!"  
And while with calm insistence brighter grew  
The skies above them, and the golden flood  
Still westward rolling, left the grey skies blue,  
The waken'd nymph rose slowly to her knees  
And kiss'd white hands to the departed night.  
"Sweet Night, farewell!" she whisper'd.  
"Come thou soon  
Behind the sober mystery of dusk  
And bring to me, whose heart so heavy is,  
Thy quietude and thy delicious rest.

## ŒNONE

---

Sweet Night, farewell!" Then turn'd she to  
the one

Whose eager face had sadden'd, kneeling there  
So close beside her. "In my dreams I see,"  
Said she, "thy face, Lanassa. Be not sad  
Because I love the mirror-holding Night  
And not the Day. Upon that magic disc  
Our loves are pictured. All that cannot be  
Thereon enacted is; and, fancy-fed,  
Sad hearts that else would sicken, else would  
cease

Their unconsider'd beating, grow most strong."  
Unknown to them, while yet Ocyroë  
Was speaking thus, and fair Lanassa loosed  
Her heavy hair, the third nymph, Thornax,  
woke

And, saying nothing, listen'd; and when turn'd  
The sadder one to shake her tenderly  
And bid her greet the morning, lo! her eyes  
Were bright with mischief. "I have heard,"  
she said,

"Thy pretty story. When I sleep I dream  
Of others than Lanassa. There is one  
That walks with Paris when he tends his sheep,  
Whose eyes are joyous. I have follow'd him  
From tree to tree and berried bush to bush,  
All fearful lest he see me. Once he sang  
A song as wistful as a lover's is

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Who knows that on his darling ever glare  
The lidless eyes of agate-hearted Time.  
Of him I dream while thou, Ocyroë,  
Dreamest of sweet Lanassa." Then she  
laugh'd,

Until it seem'd a thousand birds awoke  
And sang the morning and the joy of it,  
Until the woods re-echo'd. In the east  
The sun so high was now that one by one,  
The trees received their blessing at its hands  
And every dell grew golden. In the grass  
The nymphs still lay, until the deer's low call  
Should tell them they might venture to the pool  
And bathe unseen. And now Lanassa spoke:

"I think that Paris would Ænone wed  
Were she but kind," she said. "One droning  
noon

I saw them standing where the wind-wreck'd oak  
Bridges the stream that fills our favor'd pool.  
And long they whisper'd. He impassion'd was.  
He seem'd more king than shepherd, and the  
skin

That hid his gleaming shoulders from the sun  
Was worn as though a royal robe it were.  
So close I crept, my pale Ocyroë,  
I almost heard him woo her; but I know  
That what he said was very beautiful  
Because Ænone's face was poppy-red,

## ŒNONE

---

Although she would not answer. In my mind  
I heard him beg what Pan once begg'd of me—  
That I would kiss that horrid mouth of his  
And twine my fingers in his musty beard;  
But though the lips that ask'd so small a thing  
Were very tempting, yet she turn'd from him  
And fled the while he call'd her. In my heart  
I pitied Paris." But Ocyroë  
Now pale was as the lily, whose retreat  
In deepest dells is, where by night and day  
It droops above its sorrow. From the nymphs  
She turn'd her face, and they, still fashioning  
Their silky tresses to their own content,  
Were thinking of Œnone. "With the stars,"  
Said Thornax, laughing, "she has held much  
speech.

She reads the future. If thou pleasest her  
She promises a husband; anger her,  
And thou art doom'd to press alone the fern  
Until the leaves in pity cover thee.  
Let Paris wed her. She will summon us  
To bind their brows with garlands, sing to her,  
And dance, perhaps, until our hair blows free,  
While satyrs breathe on joyous-noted pipes  
Airs as illusive as the thing we love."  
And then she sigh'd. For Sorrow is the name  
Of Joy's own shadow; and the gods know well  
That sighs must follow laughter. In the woods

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

These truths are known, as on the moody seas,  
And where hot stars magnificently flame  
Amid their colder sisters. Only we,  
Puff'd specks of passion and inconsequence  
On winds as unsubstantial—only we  
Who enter into being with a cry  
And crying leave it, deem us masterful  
And curbless in our grasp for happiness.

AND while of him whose steps had never  
led

To where she waited, Thornax ever dream'd,  
Lanassa turn'd to where Ocyroë  
Was kneeling, silent. "Should Ænone wed,  
Thy hands must weave the marriage wreaths,"  
she said.

"These many years her solemn eyes seek thine  
Whene'er we meet; she loves thy gentleness,  
Thy pale, pure beauty. Thornax lovely is.  
But Thornax is the morning's; thou and night  
Belov'd are of Ænone. Should she wed  
Thy voice must lead the golden marriage song  
And chant the prayer to Venus; thou alone  
Canst deck her bed with violet and fern."  
But Thornax now had risen. "Come!" she  
said.

"I heard just then the deer's call. Let us  
haste

## ŒNONE

---

To where the pool lies gleaming. Thou shalt  
see,

Demure Lanassa, how such pearls adorn  
My body's whiteness when I plunge therein  
And rise again to tease thee. Then I'll haste  
To those same hills where Paris with his sheep  
Wanders each morn in moody discontent;  
But if my heart's desire, the gentle youth  
Of whom I dream while thou, Ocyroë,  
Dreamest of us, if he be otherwheres  
I'll pray the gods to scatter wide the flock  
And keep him from Œnone." And before  
The others knew it, she had slipp'd away;  
And soon that silv'ry laugh of hers was heard  
Faint grown and then far fainter, down the  
woods,

As free from care as is the light-wing'd lark's  
Above contented meadows. Then again  
Lanassa turn'd to pale Ocyroë  
And touch'd her shoulder. "Thou hast said no  
word

To still," she said, "my prattle. Thornax  
sighs,

And laughs as quickly. Thou as silent art  
As the dear trees around us. Art thou sad  
Because Œnone would fair Paris wed?"  
And even then the nymph no answer made,  
But laid her fingers on the other's head



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And press'd it slowly backward, till the eyes  
So brown and innocent look'd back in hers.  
And then she spoke. "The air is warm," she  
said;

"And Thornax waits our coming. In thine  
eyes

I see but happy trust and wonderment;  
Thy lips are curved in childhood's pure de-  
light;

Thy brow serene is. As thou growest old  
With these our leafy sisters, be thy lot  
As happy and as care-free as is theirs.  
Their peace be thine. But question not again  
Why I am sad." Then lower'd she her hand  
And led the way beneath wide-reaching oaks  
And gracious cedars till they saw the pool  
Where Thornax now was bathing. "In my  
heart

I think thou lovest him," Lanassa said,  
And fain had tarried. But Ocyroë,  
Her arms upraised to where the brooding gods  
Sit and decree how loves shall ever end,  
Ran swiftly forward past the startled deer  
And left the little nymph still questioning.



## ŒNONE

---

**A**NNUMBER'D bees were humming o'er  
the fields

When Paris turn'd his footsteps to the  
woods,

His tasks forgetting. He had left his sheep  
With that same youth, whom Thornax from  
afar

Still watch'd with eyes of longing; sad at heart,  
And thinking of Œnone, to himself

He breathed her name, nor noted at his feet  
The forest's hues and yielding carpetry,  
Nor aught about him. This was Priam's son,  
And heir to Troy's huge tragedy. Ere birth  
A child of menace to his father's house,  
That father doom'd his innocence to death;  
But he who should have put him to the sword  
To Ida's slopes convey'd him, where at last  
Rough shepherds found him and had made him  
theirs,

Saving what else had perish'd. Thus the gods  
Whose wills are adamant, whose hearts are  
hard,

Prepared to use him as an instrument  
To fill grey hell and ruin half a world.  
But now he was still young, still innocent,  
A youth whom oft a wayward nymph had loved,  
And found unpractised in the arts of love

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And constant to CEnone. Naught he knew  
Of all the horror that must follow him  
In later years, when Helen's treachery  
Had drawn its bloody destiny to Troy;  
And naught he knew of how CEnone, too,  
Would sometime pay the price of constancy  
To one so doom'd as he; would seek him out  
In other silences and other glooms  
To prove what love is when one loves so well.

PAST hoary oaks and pines whose fragrances  
Are sweeter than the odors of the East,  
Unmindful even of the choruses  
Of happy birds above him, on he went  
To where he knew the nymph awaited him,  
A leafy place where oft the night had heard  
Impassion'd pleas and whisper'd promises,  
And utter'd dreams. For she, of all the maids  
Whose beauty glimmer'd in the woods at dusk,  
The fairest was, and much he worshipp'd her  
And much she loved. And so, when her retreat  
At last confronted him, and on her couch,  
Sweet grasses weaving for a coronal,  
He saw her seated, to his lips there came  
Mad words of longing. "Never now may Sleep  
Draw his soft plumes across my weary eyes,  
CEnone, sweet CEnone!" Thus he cried

## ŒNONE

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While slow her eyes were raised to welcome  
him.

“My heart a-flame is, and I cannot rest  
By night or day; I would that I were dead  
That Death’s grey hands might cool my fever’d  
heart.”

And then Œnone teased him. “See!” she  
said;

“This crown I weave to place upon the brows  
Of white Diana when she asks of me  
Which way the surly boar went, or the deer  
With splendid antlers press’d against his neck  
And eyes of brown affright. If thou wilt smile  
I’ll place it on thy curl-enamored head  
And wake Apollo’s envy. If thou wilt  
I’ll crown myself, and thou shalt worship me  
And kiss my pulses. See! My tawny hair  
Is almost golden when I deck it thus.”  
And then she crown’d herself, and laugh’d at  
him

Whose eyes unhappy were. “Why standest  
thou

Thus mute?” she question’d. “In the night  
there came

A satyr here who sang sweet songs to me  
Of hush’d retreats in other woods than these,  
And bade me seek them. He has promised me  
Tall ferns and matchless grottoes, crystal pools

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

By winds unruffled, comfortable swards  
Circled by oaks and brooding cypresses.  
There meets at dawn the forest sisterhood  
To hymn the day; and there at night comes Pan  
Untutor'd Pan, whose airs so wondrous are  
That coldest nymphs adore him. But at noon,  
When the bright air is warm and tremulous,  
And naught is stirring, all deserted are  
Those em'rald stretches, and the gods gaze down  
And find delight in their serenity."

But Paris now was seated at her side.

"Be kind!" he cried. "I care for naught  
but thee.

Thy talk is of the forest, of green swards  
And shaggy satyrs; whisper once 'I love'  
That I may hearten'd be, may lift my lips  
To thine for comfort ere I pale and die."  
And still Ænone teased him. "In thy lips  
The crimson tells me thou art far from  
death;"

She said, and eyed him closely. "On my cheek  
Thy hand is warm; thy heart is riotous;  
The odor of thy hair is very sweet.  
And shouldst thou come to-morrow to this place  
And find me gone, the rising moon would hear  
Thy vows of constancy to one more fair,  
More kind than is Ænone. While he sang,  
The satyr eyed me with such wistfulness

## ŒNONE

---

That, had he beckon'd, I—" But Paris now  
Was red with anger. " Could I follow him  
To where he hides," he said, " this very noon  
His cries should teach thee that thy Paris is  
Thy lover, cold Œnone." Then again  
His anger left him. " That I love," he cried,  
" Thou knowest well; and that my passion is  
Enduring as is Time. When nevermore  
I breathe thy name amid the silences  
Of blessed night, or when the glory warms  
The void above us, from my lips no more  
Shall whispers issue; when no more I see  
Thy fancied form beside me, to the light  
And earth's fresh beauty shall these eyes be  
closed.

Œnone! Love me! Perish'd loveliness  
Is everywhere about us. From the woods  
White nymphs have vanish'd; from the hills  
have pass'd  
Unnumber'd shepherds; and the loves of them,  
Their whispers and their murmurs and their  
dreams

Are futile as the sighs of yesterday.  
A little while, Œnone, thou and I  
May walk, as did those others, 'neath the skies  
And talk of stars, companionable trees,  
Of clouds and windy music; but ere long,  
With all that loved before us, we must go

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And leave the trees, the stars, the clouds behind  
For others to delight in. I am thine!  
I love thee! Let the mystery of dusk  
Behold thee mine, behold thee in these arms  
For ever shelter'd; that when come the stars  
To guide the pensive moon along her way  
To where her lover waits her, they may see  
True love still heedless is of death and time."

**H**OW still the woods that morning! Deep  
in fern  
The deer reclined, while, heedless of the sun,  
The noiseless rabbits watch'd them; from the  
boughs  
No song descended, for the birds were mute  
In this one hour when everything was still  
Save the clear brook, whose babbling was of  
fields,  
Sad willows and the majesty of hills.  
The trees were moveless. Rich in memories  
Of windy dawns and tempest-frenzied nights,  
When angry lightnings split in twain the dark  
And sear'd the rocks, they waited now, at peace,  
Knowing the winds would quicken them again.  
So still the woods! When worn and comfort-  
less,  
Or weary of To-day's unloveliness  
And hollow men, seek thou the blessèd trees,

## ŒNONE

---

Our gentler sisters. Thou shalt see old Pan  
A nymph pursuing; thou shalt hear him play  
Faint airs of days far fairer than our own,  
Illusive airs that wander down the wind  
Like fragrance of blown roses. O'er thy head  
Shall fall the evanescent glories that were thine  
In days of youth, and peace shall come to thee  
And make thee envied of life's emperors.

AND now Œnone laid upon his hair  
White hands of comfort, but her eyes were  
sad

Despite the happy curving of her lips.  
“I love thee, Paris,” almost whisper'd she,  
Though no one else could hear her. “In the  
dawn

I oft have watch'd thee following thy sheep  
To stilly uplands where Aurora casts  
Her gleaming greeting as the stars go down.  
And oft I wish'd that I were with thee there,  
To share thy dreams and such a destiny  
As blesses men that ask not over-much.  
But more I know than thou, to whom the  
stars

Convey no message, in whose ears the wind  
No promise whispers. I have read thy fate,  
And mine, sweet Paris.” But the youth was  
fond.



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

“To-day we love,” he answer’d. “Let the  
    gods

To-morrow send me bitterness or woe,  
This hour has made me equal unto them;  
Thy lips have bless’d me. Having won thy  
    love.

Naught else is in their giving; holding it,  
I scorn their anger though they send me death.  
Within these forests I would ever dwell  
With thee, Cœnone. Of ambitious men  
The gods take note; their lightnings search for  
    kings,

But overlook the shepherd.” “Thou,” she  
    said,

“Art kingly, Paris.” But he silenced her  
And said again he loved her, telling her  
Of days to be, of sunsets and of dawns  
And stilly nights of moonlight and of peace.  
And then she kiss’d him. “For thy dreams,”  
    she said,

“I love thee, Paris. Many years I dream  
With trees and flowers and the contented things  
That love the sunlight. It is all that counts.  
Dream, then, and love me. While thou may’st,  
    be true—

Nay! lay not thus thy fingers on my lips;  
For more I know than I would weight thee with,  
My own heart being heavy—and be kind



## ŒNONE

---

Until the gods shall draw thee otherwheres  
And leave me grieving." Now the woods were  
still,

Save when the bee droned softly in its flight  
From flower to flower, unmindful of this pair  
Whose dream was golden as the air itself;  
And then there peer'd from out the bushes'  
shade

Brown eyes upon them; but the stately doe  
Saw nothing harmful, and so browsed a while  
And pass'd away beneath as stately trees  
To other dells as stilly. And at last,  
Her perfect face still pale above his heart  
And list'ning to its music, Paris spoke  
That heart's own passion. "I am thine," he  
cried.

"Forever and forever. Read again  
This night thy stars, when on thine eyes no  
more

My fond lips linger. All is passing here.  
Thy loveliness, my passion, both are doom'd  
As are the leaves that tremble o'er our heads  
When sighs the wind above them. Yesterday  
Awaits the shrunken spectre of To-day,  
And both shall mock To-morrow. All goes  
down

To utter silence; and the hopes of men  
Are vain as is their boasting. Love me, then,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

And make my love more perfect. To the hills  
The dawn shall lead me. Thou shalt hear me  
pipe,

My sheep around me, such illusive airs  
As lure pale nymphs from shadowy retreats  
To brave the sunlight; but the gentler dusk  
Shall turn my footsteps homeward, unto thee,  
My sweet *Ænone*." It was bravely said;  
For youth, with careless laughter, wind-blown  
hair

And eyes whose eagerness is not yet dimm'd,  
Heeds not the gods. It holds within its hands  
Its gift of joy, its tall and flame-crown'd  
torch,

And runs its race regardless of their frowns  
Or distant thunder. Change concerns it not;  
Dread Death is but a fancy when it loves.  
And this *Ænone* knew; for she was wise  
As trees are wise, whose pretty leaves prepare  
Earth's solemn couch for the eternal sleep  
Awaiting trees and lovers. On her lips  
The smile still trembled, but her eyes were sad  
As erst they were. "Day hastens to its close,"  
She said at last, and kiss'd again his hair.  
"A little while and from its lonely nest  
The dove, the forest's hopeless melodist,  
Shall raise its sad remonstrance to the stars  
And win our hearts to pity. From the trees

## ŒNONE

---

Long shadows steal, and soon sweet Night shall  
lay

Her holy hands upon us. She will bless  
The nestled birds and all whose mission is  
To make the fair day fairer. To thy sheep  
Go thou in haste, lest an unshelter'd ewe  
Should miss its lamb at dawn-burst. Then to  
me

Come thou, Belovèd. See! the shadows touch  
Thy feet and mine. We whisper and we dream,  
Surer of time than misers of their gold,  
Yet life the while is passing; in the dark  
We tell our vows, and suddenly we find  
Bleak age upon us. Then the dream is done,  
The glory over; and the while we stand  
Like wither'd sheaves on desolation's plain,  
The joys we gather'd and the joys we miss'd  
Haunt us like spectres. O my love, make  
haste!

Afar I hear the melancholy horn  
That calls another to the boat of doom  
And the unsated Boatman. There at last  
We both must go, and the dear things of day  
Shall greet our eyes no longer. Therefore  
haste

To where thy sheep are calling. Dawn must  
find

Thine arm about me, and mine eyes so glad

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

That, should the gods destroy us, e'en in hell  
Their light may comfort thee and, comforting,  
Forever and forever keep thee mine."

**B**UT they that sit in judgment over all  
Disturb'd them not, nor even noticed  
them

For many years. With birds and gentle things  
Whose sister is the forest, they were one,  
And one with nymphs and lighter-hearted fauns  
And speedy centaurs, swift as were the winds.  
On morns of palest gold and lavender,  
The grass still dew-drench'd, from their shelt'-  
ring trees

They spied the virgin Huntress and her maids  
Flashing with all the noiselessness of light  
From dell to dell; or, when the day was done,  
The long chase ended, with less eager feet  
And careless laughter homeward o'er the hills  
By twos and threes returning. One by one  
Ænone named them, mark'd this wondrous hair,  
That alabaster bosom, or a brow  
Imperiously perfect, chastely pale.  
But Paris gazed serenely at the face  
Beside his own, contented; hers he deem'd  
Far fairer than the fairest of the nymphs

## ŒNONE

---

Untouch'd as yet by Love's enflaming dart  
Or humanizing kisses. To the streams  
She led him in the dawn-hush, where they saw  
The slant-eyed satyrs bathing, riotous  
As children in the water; through the woods  
To where the fields encroach'd upon the wilds  
They slipp'd at even and, themselves unseen,  
Watch'd the brown tiller of the browner soil  
Conclude his toil, the herdsman drive his kine  
To peaceful waters or their night's repose.  
And night by night they sought a hidden spot  
Where nymph nor satyr ventured. Mighty  
trees

Enclosed a pool of such sweet restfulness  
That much they loved it, and would sit them  
down  
And tell their dreams there. "When thou leav-  
est me,"

Œnone whisper'd, "I shall come by night  
To this dear spot; and thou, where'er thou art,  
Shalt know that I am constant." And he  
laugh'd

And stroked her tresses; but she sigh'd again,  
And bade him promise to be true to her.  
For them old Pan blew wistful melodies,  
Or airs so joyous that they laugh'd and danced  
Until the forest's silence chided them;  
And then they knelt beside him, while he sang

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

What once had happen'd when the trees were  
    young  
And gods made merry. When the tale was told  
They wreathed his brows with laurel, and he  
    pass'd,  
Still piping to the welcome of the trees.  
The Seasons came, the woods re-visiting—  
Spring, with her joyous laughter; Summer then  
And sober Autumn; and with sadder mien  
The lagging Winter, with its brighter stars  
To keep men hopeful. And the lovers dream'd  
From dawn till eve regardless of the Hours,  
Unmindful then, as e'en to-day they are,  
Of love or death; and then they dream'd again  
When Sleep, so wise and so compassionate,  
So tender and so kind, because so old,  
Breathed on their heavy eyelids from the dark.

**B**UT love so perfect never long escapes  
The gods' attention. They were watch-  
ful now

Of Paris and Ænone; from the heights  
Of crystal silence, coldly luminous,  
They look'd upon them and devised a plan  
To wreck this happiness, as one may wreck  
The finish'd effort of the toiling ants  
Or patient spider. Paris, they decreed,  
Should judge who fairest was of goddesses

## ŒNONE

---

(Themselves too wise to solve the argument  
Then stirring heaven); and bribed by promises  
Of earth's most perfect woman for his wife,  
His own forgetting, he, one gleaming morn,  
Crown'd Venus queen. The greatest tragedies  
Have ever small beginnings. Priam now  
In distant Troy, the gods still furthering  
Their fell designs, caused contests to be held  
'Twixt youth and youth, his war-like sons and  
all

Whose names then famous were for bravery  
And man-like qualities—the prize to be  
A Trojan bull, the best that paw'd the ground  
Of Ida's summit or dismay'd the herds  
In smiling meadows. And the slaves whose task  
It was to seek it, found that Paris own'd  
The lordly beast, and dragg'd it to the king  
And were rewarded; but the shepherd swore  
No hand should ever tame it save his own,  
So arm'd himself for conquest. Naught avail'd  
Œnone's tears and naught her wifely love,  
And naught the thoughtless prattle of their  
boy—

Their only darling. He was eager now;  
And laugh'd and bade her love him till he came  
With hard-won laurels. And she answer'd not;  
For woman pays with tears and bitterness  
For man's ambitions. But before he went



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Still eager, from her presence, from the woods  
Where nevermore their whispers were to sound,  
And nevermore her laughter, on his hair  
She laid her hands. "The gods be good to  
thee,"

She said, and kiss'd him. "I shall think of thee  
When morning breaks upon my loneliness  
And to the skies thy son uplifts his hands  
In child-like adoration; in the dusk  
I'll breathe thy name and winds shall carry it  
To where thou sleepest, dreaming of my love.  
A little while I still would cling to thee,  
Would feel thy strong heart's beating. In the  
night

When all alone I lie upon my fern  
What anguish now awaits me! But of thee  
My thoughts shall be, and I shall pray for thee  
When saddest is my heart, and heaviest.  
I kiss thee, thus. For never shall we tread  
These woods together, nor be mad again  
In blessèd twilights as we once were mad  
With stars and fragrances, and happy things  
That wot not of their own impermanence.  
And yet I feel that thou shalt come to me  
In death's dread hour, that I upon this brow  
May place my hands before earth's heavy  
weight  
Lies heavily upon it, O my love.



## ŒNONE

---

There lies thy road. Go, love, and look not  
back.

My love thou art, my shepherd; go thou now  
As goes the hero. I shall follow thee  
With eyes that look their last upon the sun  
Of all most perfect, all that is belov'd  
Beneath the skies. My heart is breaking. Go!"  
And he was gone. Troy beckon'd, and he went,  
As men have ever gone when Fortune call'd,  
The one forgetting who must stay behind.

AND now from time to time there reach'd  
the woods

Faint echoes of his doings. One there was,  
An idle goat-herd, whose delight it was  
To woo Lanassa; while another sought  
Love's favors of fair Thornax. When they met  
These silly swains would tell them what they  
knew,

And they in turn told pale Ocyroë,  
Who told Œnone, e'en as maids to-day  
Will ever gossip. Thus the woods soon heard  
How Paris by his beauty conquer'd Troy  
And made men wonder where a youth so fair  
These many years had wander'd. Then the  
news

Of how his valor proved invincible;  
How Nestor, Cycnus and old Priam's sons

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Had fled before him, warm'd Œnone's heart  
Because she loved him and was proud of him.  
But very pale was that Ocyroë  
The while she heard Œnone's praise of him,  
And oft she bent her head above the boy  
Whose prattle naught could silence. What to  
him

Were deeds of valor when the air contain'd  
The dipping swallow and the butterfly,  
The wayward thistle-drift and humming bee?  
And soon the swains were telling of the fight  
With steel-thew'd Hector who, though beaten  
down,

Drove Paris, refuge seeking, to the fane  
Whence incense upward curl'd to Jupiter,  
And where no man might slaughter. There,  
too, came

Cassandra, the far-seeing, unapprised  
As yet of Troy's red ending and her own;  
Who, seeing Paris, and how like he was  
To anger'd Hector, ask'd him who he was  
And where the years had hid him. Unto her,  
Pale Death beside him, Paris told the tale  
Of his upbringing; and she wept with him,  
And led him forth to Priam. To his breast  
The old man clasp'd him, while the weight of  
years

Fell from his shoulders like a heavy robe

## ŒNONE

---

And left him happy; and the sons came up  
And call'd him brother and were glad to claim  
With Paris kinship. Then all Troy rejoiced  
And mighty torches made the night seem day.  
But, hearing this, Œnone turn'd away  
And left the teller of the tale alone.

For well she knew that Paris now must go  
The ways of princes, and the woods no more  
Might lure his footsteps; never now the peace  
Of meadows call him. He was one with kings  
And kingly aspirations. Pomp and war  
Would draw him ever from the arms of her,  
And gleaming Glory lure him to the heights  
Whence simple love is banish'd. To her breast  
She press'd her boy; and when the nymphs  
would come

With gifts of fruits and berries, golden corn  
And fine, firm olives, bade them look at him  
And note his chubby limbs, his curling hair,  
His eyes and all the loveliness of him.  
But oh! the constant sorrow of her lips,  
That told her heart's eternal heaviness.  
And then the story of Hesione,  
King Priam's sister, forced by Hercules  
From home to wedlock travell'd to the woods  
And thrill'd the nymphs; for Paris, it was said,  
By their enamor'd, faithful messengers,  
Had built a fleet of triremes; pack'd with men

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Whose very shouts would terrify the stars,  
Huge-handed, iron-muscled, they had sail'd  
With Paris as their leader to her aid.  
And once again, CEnone, having heard  
This latest fable (for it was no more),  
Had wept a little, but was proud of him,  
And pray'd the gods to speed him on his way.  
But Thornax, who was wise beyond her years,  
Said nothing when the other nymphs extoll'd  
CEnone's lover. For the youth whose steps  
Had follow'd Paris when he tended sheep  
Was now in Troy, and, loving him, she knew  
What maids might there allure him. Even now  
She saw soft arms around him, heard him sigh  
When whitest fingers bound his brows with  
leaves

Of oak and fadeless laurel. Paris, too,  
Would prove as fickle—ah! she knew it well,  
That little nymph whom never herd might win.  
And then one day all Troy ran here and there,  
While Priam clutch'd with marble hands his  
throne

And glared in silence. For the tale was told  
By one who sail'd with Paris, now return'd  
To where his own were calling, that his lord  
Had steer'd for Sparta, where of Menelaus  
Fair Helen wife was, deem'd most beautiful  
Of all earth's wondrous women. Under guise,

## ŒNONE

---

So said this man, of paying sacrifice  
To bright Apollo, he had woo'd and won  
The blue-eyed queen from husband and from  
home,

And now was Troyward hasting. At his heels  
Ten thousand ships with thrice ten thousand  
men

And Greece's princes, eager for his blood,  
Smote the curl'd waves asunder; they would ask  
Of Priam's hands before the month was gone  
The bright-hair'd prince and his adulteress  
Or leave the city level with the plain

For winds to scatter with the desert's dust.

Thus raved the bearded fellow, while his eyes

Roam'd from his pallid wife and little ones

To where the far hills' green security

Loom'd indistinctly. And he fled to them

With those he loved, and was not seen again,

Nor ever heard of. And the sun went down

Upon a silent city and a king

Whose doom was written though he knew it not,

Whose children were to perish by the sword

And he to follow by that bloody end.

All this was soon imparted to the nymphs,

Who told Œnone; and the later tale

Of how one golden dawn her Paris came,

The gleaming Helen with him, to the town

That fear'd his coming; how the aged king,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Himself a victim to a thing so fair,  
Had scorn'd the stern ambassadors from Greece  
And brought his woe upon him. Then no more  
Might shepherds slip through closely-guarded  
gates,

Past horrid engines and encircling camps  
To where the pale ones trembled in the woods,  
Their news awaiting. But at night they stole,  
Those fearsome nymphs, to where by bushes  
hid

They still might peer upon the fated town  
And its grim menace. And the leaping flames  
That sometimes rent the horror-stricken dark  
Spoke to the breathless watchers of the slain,  
Whose hands no more might grasp the javelin  
In Troy's defence; whose eyes outstared the  
stone;

Whose dreams were over. And they crept  
away—

Lanassa, Thornax and Ocyroë—  
To quiet pools or thickets odorous  
Where ne'er was heard the rasping engines' din  
Or the lean jackals howling on the plain.

**W**EEKS pass'd, and months. Upon the  
gentle trees  
Time lays no weighty hand; alone on men  
It presses from the cradle to the grave

## ŒNONE

---

And crushes mad ambition. From a seed  
The sapling springs, and is content to grow  
With still insistence through the centuries,  
Itself a part of beauty; heeding not  
Its fair example, we, who deem us wise,  
Clamor against the silence of the stars  
And die before its life is well begun.

Months pass'd and years. The meadows were  
as fair

As when the sun first woo'd them; and the hills,  
Aware of how their hearts for ever held  
Impenetrable secrets, at the skies  
As calmly stared as when no eye had seen  
The first-laid stone of Troy's magnificence.

Years pass'd—and years! Pale woe and paler  
Death

And pitiless Destruction o'er the town  
Had grinn'd and glared, while Desolation  
stalk'd

Its batter'd walls, its horror-haunted streets  
And fear-fill'd palaces; but still the woods  
Were greenly peaceful, and the song of birds  
Was all that sometimes broke their silences.  
And though the shepherds long had wander'd  
thence,

Too fearful to be constant, now and then  
The nymphs would learn the sorrow of the town  
And tell Œnone. Much they held from her;



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

For Paris now was hated of all men,  
And all condemn'd him. In his palace lay  
The one whose perfidy was cramming hell  
With Troy's fair children; but her eyes were  
cold

To all save Paris, and she watch'd them die  
With unconcernèd gaze and lips as firm  
As was the archer's bow that guarded her.  
And though men bade him send the harlot home  
That war might cease, and Troy be glad again,  
Her arms were magnets, and they drew him in,  
And he forgot the anger'd multitude  
Upon her peerless bosom. In their hearts  
Men hated her and Paris; yet so fair  
This wondrous pair, these lovers of all time,  
That each forgot his grievance, seeing them,  
Yet cursed again when they had pass'd away.  
These tales were told and somehow reach'd the  
nymphs,

Now older and far sadder than of yore  
When first they gather'd on the slanting hills  
And laugh'd at love and lovers. But the years,  
Those awful years of carnage, lessen'd not  
Ænone's love for Paris. From the woods  
She drew fresh courage, and her boy's clear eyes  
Were stars of promise. Moments came to her  
When the bright beauty that encircled her  
Fill'd her with longing for the peace that is



## ŒNONE

---

True beauty's spirit, and she cried aloud  
For Paris, Paris. Yet she doubted not  
That he one day would part the greenery  
And, like a splendor, greet her. Though no  
more

She heard the faithful, pale Ocyroë  
(Long gather'd to the comfort of the soil)  
Re-tell his doings, she was sure of him,  
And sure that soon her eyes should see again  
The form so dear. To that sweet pool she  
went—

The pool that heard their whispers—night by  
night,

And dream'd of him. In her accustom'd place  
One silv'ry night when she was seated there,  
Her love should find her; and her vows re-told,  
Her lashes wet no longer, they would seek  
Their sleeping boy. To-morrow! If not then—  
Ah! many years her lips had form'd the word  
As darkness closed about her; many years  
The dawn had found her, lifting quiet eyes  
To where Hope smiled upon her loneliness.

SWEET Hope, most mild and most com-  
passionate,  
Life's kindest of companions. From the skies  
Where gleaming stars attend thee, thou dost  
bend

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Earthward thy gaze, and o'er despondent men  
And those who scorn the hatred of the stars  
Thou lookest benediction, smilest peace.  
Thy mantle trails the darkness that lies furl'd  
About the awful beauty of the worlds;  
But higher than the proudest of the orbs  
Thy hands are lifted, and infinity  
Rebounds the aspirations of thy soul.  
Thus bursts the dawn above thee; thus the light  
From distances unthinkable is pour'd  
To fill thee with a promise, as by day  
The hearts of men are fill'd with purposes  
Beyond the hand's performance. From the  
heights

Thou drawest thus the promise of the high,  
The promise that is hinted by the hills,  
And sung by surging waters; then from down  
The ardent skies thou steppest to the ways  
Whereon men wander aimlessly, or with  
Eyes set against the goal of their desire—  
The ways whereon they suffer or are glad.  
Thou shatterest the darkness; at thy gaze  
The lone, the lost, the broken, and the host  
That bend in doubt and tremble in despair  
Look up, look out to hazy distances  
Of pearl and promise, to the dawns that gild  
The threshold of the Future. Æons hence,  
With all their idols shatter'd, soulless creeds

## ŒNONE

---

Flung to the writhing turmoil of the winds,  
And dreams long dead, men still shall follow  
    thee,  
And lift pale hands above the moment's stress  
Whene'er they see thy flaming face, O Hope!

AND true it is that Paris, mark'd at last  
For that grey place where greyer shadows  
    tell

Of life's illusions; where the mists enfold  
Alike pale lovers and applauded men,  
Both king and shepherd, being near to death,  
Forgot the gleaming Helen, and to her  
Whose gentler beauty haunted him in dreams  
Turn'd in his weakness and his spirit's stress.  
Whom Fortune favors, Death eyes greedily;  
The humble live until the shafts of Chance  
Fulfill his minor purpose. On a day  
When never life seem'd sweeter; when the air  
Flash'd with the movement of a myriad wings  
And hinted the protection of the gods,  
Death stared at Paris. Then he left the world  
Of spears and heroes, wounded mortally,  
And sought the woods where once his sheep had  
    browsed  
From dawn till dusk. "The end is near," he  
    sigh'd

To them that stood beside him where he lay,

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Of death expectant. "I can see no more  
The setting sun nor the encrimson'd skies  
Above our Troy; the thunder of the stones  
Against our walls is like the lap of waves  
On shores of golden velvet. Bear me hence  
From where I lie to her whose hands may cool  
My burning forehead e'er it chills in death."  
And one cried: "Master, we will bear thee  
straight

To where, unconscious of the coming night  
Which soon must be her portion, she awaits  
Her lord's arrival. There she waits for thee  
On carpets crimson as the solemn skies  
Thine eyes can see no longer. Helen waits."  
But Paris cried, as if in agony,  
And they that served him listen'd. "Not to  
her,"

Said he, "I bid ye bear me. Let her bide  
Amid her tapestries and see me not,  
Whose life is wasted through mad love of her.  
But bear me hence, O trusted hearts of mine,  
To where the woods in pity gaze on us  
Doom-circled mortals. From the plain creeps  
out

A straight lean path; if ye but follow it  
The line shall lead ye to an ancient tree,  
The forest's outpost. There I'll tell ye more.  
I fain would rest a little, being weak."

## ŒNONE

---

And then, all-tenderly, they lifted him  
And laid him in the hollow of his shield,  
And raised it shoulder-high; then look'd ahead  
To find the matted path of long ago,  
The path he well remember'd. Then at once  
The four stepp'd forward, heroes all of them.  
And so, unnoticed, picked their way through  
death

In utter silence. Now the sun had set,  
And they that warr'd were gather'd in their  
tents

Or Troy's wreck'd temples, where they pray'd  
the gods

For better fortune. Dogs ran here and there,  
And nosed the dying. But nor dogs nor men  
Beheld the bearers as they slipp'd away,  
Their hearts as heavy as the thing they bore  
Upon their shoulders. And they came at last  
To where the oak gloom'd, and of Paris ask'd  
Where they should bear him. And he spoke  
again

(How faint his voice!): "Go now to where the  
sun—

I know not if it shine on ye or not—  
Go now to where its splendor is last seen  
By lovers' eyes, as watching it descend  
They sit together, hand in trembling hand.  
Ye soon shall find a thickly-shelter'd pool

## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

Where even now a deer may take its fill  
Of blessèd water. There I oft have sat  
With one most dear beside me, in the days  
Ere fickle Venus lured me to my doom  
And this unhappy ending. Then I was  
A simple shepherd; but she loved me well,  
And still would love me, though all men recoil'd  
From one so base as Paris. Being come  
To that same pool, I bid ye lay me down  
And though I sleep, there leave me." And the  
men

Had fear'd for Paris. "We would stay," they  
cried,

"To guard thee in the shadows. In the night  
Dread Horrors lurk amid those awesome trees,  
And they may harm thee. Bid us stay by thee  
Until the woods grow golden in the dawn."

But Paris sigh'd, earth-weary. "Lay me down  
By that still pool," he whisper'd. "Though I  
sleep,

I bid ye wake me not. Then go ye back  
To Troy, my heroes. When they ask for me  
Say I am happy with the one I love,  
And, being happy, ask no more of Fame  
Or hard-eyed Glory. When ye think of me,  
Behold me in C  none's constant arms,  
At peace for ever." And they bore him on  
To where they sensed the sun had disappear'd,

## ŒNONE

---

And spoke no word. For a tremendous hush  
Had settled now on bushes and on trees  
And all that made the forest. Through the  
dark

The black bat flitted, Pluto's messenger;  
And subtle fragrances like incense rose  
To where the gods were planning. Soon would  
rise

The pallid guardian of men's destinies  
Throughout the night; and little stars would  
peep

From out the heaven's enormous draperies  
On Troy's dejection and the forest's calm,  
And wonder, wonder, wonder. But the men  
Whose backs were bow'd beneath the sagging  
shield

Look'd never up. On, on and on they went,  
All-silent in the silence, e'en as ghosts  
That flit along the unresounding floors  
Of those vast chambers in the underworld  
Where no one questions, no one makes reply.  
And soon they came to where in darkness  
gleam'd

The pool's still surface; and they laid him  
down—

Now fast asleep upon that bier-like shield,  
Asleep indeed, although they knew it not—  
And gazed at him in silence. One by one



## IDYLLS OF GREECE

---

They touch'd his forehead, yet disturb'd him  
not  
Whose sleep was sounder than the dawn might  
break;  
Or tears or kisses, or the clasp of arms  
Or passion's pleading waken. One by one,  
With hearts still heavy and with heads still  
bow'd  
They crept away through the portentous woods,  
And left him there, his cheek upon his hand,  
His eyes tight closed; and on his moveless lips  
The hint of an unfathomable smile.

***Here end the Idylls of Greece.  
Written in New York, Santa  
Barbara and Denver; in the  
years 1900-1913.***









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